2099
WORLD OF DOOM
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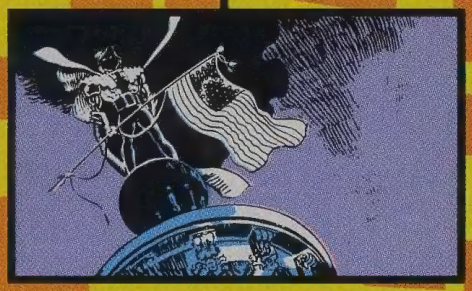
CONTENTS

DOOMED 2



AMERICA UNDER DOOM 6

AMERICA O'TIS OF DOOM 8

DRESSING THE TROOPS 14

PUNISHING EVOLUTION 19

MOORE'S MUTANT FUTURES 24

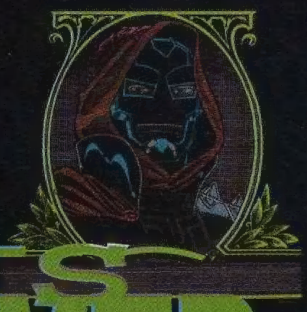
HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE 29

CYBERSPACE IS HERE 34

RULES OF ORDER 37

OUT OF MY HEAD 49

2099 IS DOOMED



Doom.

It's more than just an edict to the great unwashed masses. It is a name with which to be reckoned—a legacy left over from the 20th century. A pronouncement of all that is and is to come.

It also is the word that describes the name of the man who—this month—has either become America's greatest savior in the year 2099, or its greatest oppressor. For it is in the year of 2099 that the man named Doom will finally achieve his greatest victory: he will take over the United States of America.

According to Joey Cavalieri, who heads up the 2099 Universe, Doom has staged a bloodless *coup d'état* and set himself up as President of the U.S. because he (Doom) feels that the U.S. is the single greatest threat to his kingdom of Latveria, and the only way he can ensure the safety of his own people is to control the U.S. Needless to say, his actions will have resounding repercussions throughout the 2099 Universe. "One of the ironies that we hope to bring out," Cavalieri stated, "is, despite the fact that Doom is this fascist dictator who's ruling America with an iron hand, certain quality-of-life issues are starting to *improve*."

Included among those improvements are better police protection (citizens will no longer have to pay to be protected by the rent-a-cops); the establishing of a certain degree of justice (Black Cards that have allowed the rich to buy their way out of jail will be eliminated); cleaning up of the air and water (Environmental Maintenance Platforms will hover over every city in America); and the elimination of the Red Market (the buying and selling of humans for scientific experimentation). According to Cavalieri, Doom has, over the past several months,been marshaling his forces, finances, and resources, taking ever more bold steps in this direction.

While it is true that, in 2099, America has been ruled more by corporate entities whose world headquarters are housed on U.S. soil than by its politicians, it is precisely *because* of this that Doom has been able to take control of the country. His successes began when he firmly re-established his hold on Latveria, after which he took control of both Alchemax's sky island of Valhalla and the information databanks on the island nation of Myridia. Doom finally attracted the services of a contingent of cybergliders who then enabled him to attach America's finances, freeze everybody out, and work his way in.

Once in charge of the U.S. he immediately will begin to affect changes in the way the country is run. Ghost Rider is going to be deputized by Doom, to become the sheriff of Transverse City, and this is just *one* of the many ripples that affect all of the 2099 Universe. Now that Doom has established himself as political head of the U.S. he will wind up the head of Alchemax and the various other corporate multi-nationals.

A brief rundown of some of the immediate changes that will be occurring throughout the 2099 titles follows.

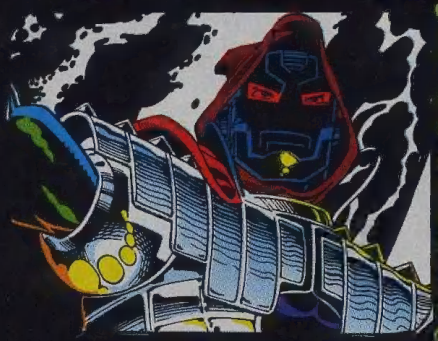
Doom

According to Warren Ellis, who is crafting Doom's takeover of the U.S., Doom is a megalomaniacal dictator who does the things he does because he is Doom, and therefore has the *right* to do such. Doom sees himself as the beloved benefactor and patron of his people, and therefore

"One of the ironies that we hope to bring out is,

he has the right to do whatever it takes to ensure their safety. "Much of what has happened in 2099 has been giving Doom what he wants," 2099 Group Editor Joey Cavalieri elaborated, "and he's always wanted control of America, so we gave it to him." Ellis chimed in that, even though Doom is not one to lightly put his trust in others, he has installed Fortune as titular head of Latveria because, "He trusts Fortune to put the welfare of the Latverian people first, as would Doom."

He appoints a mutant to his Black Cabinet, named Morphine Somers, to become the Minister of Humanity, who will eventually spin out into THE X-MEN 2099. Ellis described Somers as a twentysomething, slacker, cyberpunk with a shirt sporting a picture of Professor X and the legend, "Charley don't surf." John Moore, who will inherit Somers when the character crosses over into The X-MEN, stated that "Doom gets this guy and says, 'Look, there was never anybody more human than Charles Xavier, so I've created this Ministry of Humanity to eliminate genetic classes in the U.S.' So that's Doom's agenda concerning mutants."



Peter David, scribe of SPIDER-MAN 2099, revealed that the futuristic webhead will be flip-flopping roles with the alter-ego Miguel O'Hara. "Miguel O'Hara doesn't trust Doom, but Miguel doesn't trust *anybody*. In terms of Spider-Man, it will be really nice for him to be able to help people without having to cover up his trail. To a certain extent he will be redefining his place in society." David pointed out that it was the oppressive nature of Alchemax that helped create Spider-Man, and fostered his need to strike out and strike back against the *status quo*.

He went on to say that one of the major effects of Doom's takeover of the U.S. in general, and of Alchemax in particular, is that it will free up Spider-Man from having to fight off constant threats from Alchemax goons, and he will become sort of a Captain America figure in Doom's makeover of the country. "Now for the first time Spider-Man will be using his powers for one reason only–humanitarian concerns, which is really not a bad situation to be in." Meanwhile, while Spidey becomes more visible, Miguel will essentially "go underground" within Alchemax, attempting to discover what Doom is all about and using the company's own systems to thwart whatever it is. "He's going to be working both sides of the fence," David commented. "He will, however, be in a somewhat ironic situation, in that since there are always people in opposition to the status quo, there will now start to arise people who rebel against the notion of Doom, and now Spider-Man finds himself on the wrong side. Or is he on the wrong side?"

Spider-Man

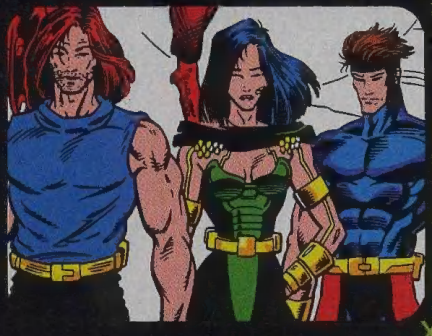
Doom will immediately clean up the trade in the Red Market, which, according to X-writer John Moore, is "the illegal and not-so-illegal trade and sale of human beings as commodities for scientific experiments, as guinea pigs, and into out-and-out slavery." Moore went on to say that mutants are valued on the Red Market because of their genetic

X-Men

despite the fact that Doom is this fascist dictator

anomalies. Doom will attempt to prevent the exploitation of these mutants, as well as the failed gengineering experiments, known as the degens. "It's a victory for humans who are treated like animals," Moore stated.

Moore indicated that leading up to X-MEN 2099 #25, he will be dealing with the Red Market and the assault on a particularly nasty segment of the Market run by the fringe group The Theater of Pain. Eventually, Doom will establish a separate city-state for mutants in the middle of the U.S.; this city-state will actually arise out of the mutant refugee camps already there (#s 27-28), and will come to house not only the mutants, but the degens and other human discards that have been spit out of "regular" society. "This will become a much bigger and much more officially sanctioned version of what Xi'an was doing with the archeology (at the beginning of issue #1)." Eventually, this city-state will come under the control of Morphine Somers, who will turn out to have his own agenda, and is *far less* altruistic than he originally appears.



"I'm going to deal less with the specifics of Doom's America in the X-MEN plots from #s 21-25, although it will be in the background, and then deal more specifically with it in #25-28, which will deal with the refugee camps." He then went on to say that Las Vegas is going to become a quarantine fallout zone from an experiment that Halloween Jack has initiated, which cause the physical laws of another dimension to become imposed on the Las Vegas area. "It's sort of *Mr. Toad's Wild Ride*," Moore stated. Part of the repercussions of this experiment will causes Doom to come to an accord with Jack, who becomes the mad king of Las Vegas.

Moore also intoned that a character previously thought dead will be revived and installed as a West Coast operative of Doom.

The Hulk

Right from the get-go, Doom's presence in America will be very strongly felt in the Hulk's book. "The Hulk is protecting Lotusland Entertainment," writer Gerry Jones outlined, "which is a movie studio that is now starting to do some anti-corporate, populist propaganda, and the Hulk is helping out with that. When Doom comes along, though, he ends up maneuvering them (Lotusland Entertainment) into aligning with him, so the Hulk quits in disgust and goes underground, spearheading an underground, anti-Doom army." Jones continued by describing the Hulk of 2099 as an anti-authoritarian character who doesn't trust a dictator even if he's supposed to be benevolent. "Within a few issues he's going to be an underground guerrilla fighter."

As depicted in the Hulk's adventures, Southern California is a very chaotic area, with numerous people jockeying for power. According to Jones, Alchemax never really got Southern California under its control, so, prior to Doom's *coup d'état* it seemed as if it were possible for some more enlightened things to be achieved in the LA basin. The problem presented by Doom is that he has the wherewithal to actually dominate that area, thus closing down this final frontier of personal freedom–something he is very likely to do.

who's ruling America with an iron hand, certain

"Lotusland has also developed an opinion-shaping, gamma-radiation technology that has the potential to affect any person's perceptions and opinions, and Doom wants this for obvious political reasons."

Under Doom, Jake Gallows–the Punisher of 2099–will be granted official sanction to set up an elite special police force (The Punishment Police) to deal more effectively and straightforwardly with the rich Black Carders who attempt to utilize their wealth and power to circumvent the law. Gallows' activities have become revealed to the Public Eye by Doom, but instead of being punished, he is congratulated and allowed to reorganize SHIELD, with himself the head of a special cadre who answer only to Gallows, and go after the cybernostra mobsters.

Punisher

Thus, what comes to pass is the Punisher's fondest dream and everybody else's worst nightmare, as the Punisher and his corps are allowed to drag reputed crime bosses from their homes in the dead of night and execute them on the street without benefit of a court trial. As one of the creators who helped develop Judge Dredd, Pat Mills feels that PUNISHER 2099 will finally achieve the potential that Dredd never could. "There were certain things that we simply weren't allowed to do with Dredd that we can do with the Punisher." While this may sound like the way to win back the city for the righteous, Mills admits that therein lies the rub. "The whole nature of what he's doing is ultimately dubious."

Tony Skinner, who co-writes RAVAGE and PUNISHER with Pat Mills, acknowledged that one of the most permanent aspects of Doom's takeover will be an all-out confrontation between Ravage and Doom. For, as Doom leads an assault on Hellrock—a toxic island in the middle of the Atlantic where Ravage and his fellow mutates are holed up—Doom opts to attempt to simply remove them from the picture rather than waste his time and energies fighting them. Hence, Doom simply opens a dimensional portal, giving Ravage and his hoard (who have been looking for this mythical "Valley of the Beast" for some time) the "option" to walk through, never to be seen again. This turn of events occurs in RAVAGE 2099 #33 which is the final episode of the series.

Ravage

Concluding his assessment of Doom's takeover of America Cavalieri stated, "I should point out that this is an event on the level of an earthquake or a general election, not a crossover *per se*. What this *is* is an attempt to pull the rug out from under the 2099 Universe and start over in a big way."

By the time the year 2099 comes around for real, freelance writer Robert J. Sodaro will be quite old.

quality-of-life issues are starting to improve."

AMERICA UNDER DOOM

Brave New World—Aldous Huxley, 1932

It Can't Happen Here—Sinclair Lewis, 1935

Gentlemen's Agreement—Laura Z. Hobson, 1953

The Man in the High Castle—Philip K. Dick, 1962

All these books warned America that in its soporific complacency lay its doom. And in 2099 A.D., the warning has been fulfilled. America the Beautiful, the Home of the Free and Land of the Brave, has fallen to the Latverian dictator, Dr. Doom.

Impossible? Fiction?

Oh, really?

VIOLENT PRECEDENT

Ever since the first prehistoric nomads crossed the ice—bridge that later became the Bering Strait, America has been ripe for the taking. Those Aleutian nomads wandered down the North American continent, eventually settling the lush Great Plains and giving rise to the early Indian civilizations. Later, Lief Erickson's Viking explorers would establish landholds on the northeast coast of what would later become Canada and the state of Maine. As years passed, and adventurous men such as Columbus, Magellan, and Drake discovered more of the New World, the monarchies of Europe claimed great sections of the continent, hoping to turn untouched wilderness and virgin resources into coffers of gold. . .and power.

The first European settlers were English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese fur trappers who established small trading posts along the coast and inner rivers. Then followed still more trappers, planters, and merchants. (America was not considered as a refuge for religious freedom until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century—and even those who sought release from persecution were granted the right to settle in America on condition that they continue to trade with the mother country).

The European presence continued to spread, and its driving force was money and power. Wars sprouted, bloomed, and died as cultures clashed over who would control the rich bank of American resources. The French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Indian Wars, the Texas War of Independence, the Spanish-American WarPthe United States came to maturity under the duress of individual men and women who *demanded* the right to control the stakes.

In unity, however, there is strength . . .and still more profit. Starting in the mid-1900s, the idea of incorporation as a means to attain great wealth and power took hold and expanded exponentially—so that by 2099, the U.S.A. has become, in reality, the "C.S.A."Pthe Corporate States of America.

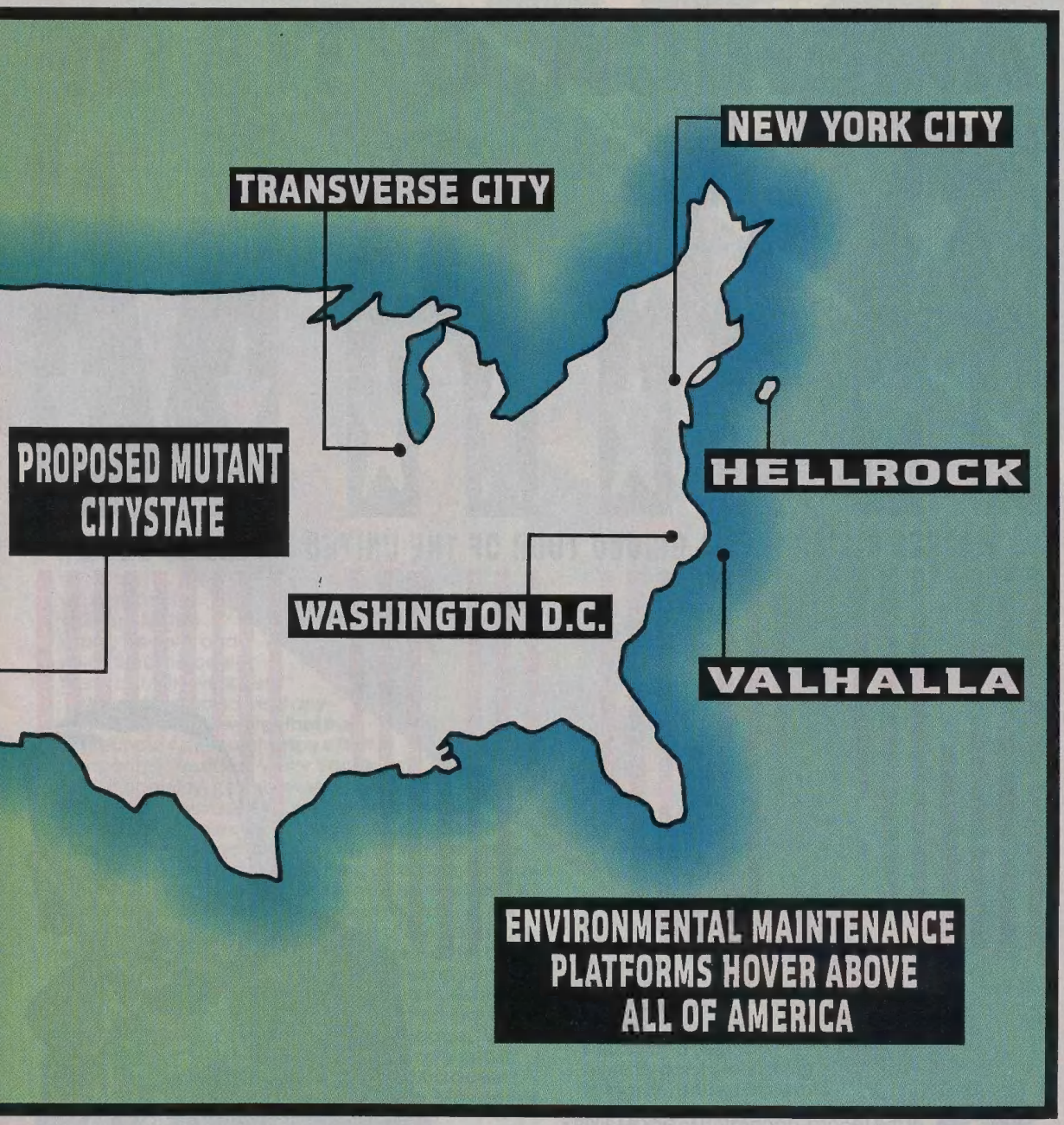
TO HAVE OR HAVE NOT

ALCHEMAX is the largest of these corporations, holding sway over the Eastern seaboard megalopolis of Washington—New York—Boston. Its seat of power is New York, home to Spider-Man 2099, and a place of the "haves" and the "have-nots." The "haves" live in the high-tech, ultra-sophisticated, ultra-skyscrapers that are built on and tower over the darker concrete canyons of the old city, where the "have-nots" struggle to survive.

Off-shore from Montauk Point, on the easternmost tip of Long Island is *Hellrock*, a toxic dumping ground where the society's worst reprobates are sent to do time. In this cesspool of humanity and humanity's drippings, Ravage 2099 struggles to survive and do what is right—an uphill battle all the way.

Although Washington, D.C. still exists, the government of the United States sits high above it in the floating city of *Valhalla*, sometimes called "Libera Cielo," which translates to "clear sky."

Dirty politics, gang warfare, and a struggling underclass combine to make *Transverse City*, south of Old Detroit, a dark underside of 2099



American life, and the perfect hellhole for Ghost Rider 2099 to seek vengeance.

The vast, rolling, empty stretches of the *Great American Southwest* have always been where men and women could test their moral fiber and integrity against the elements, a desert where the law lay on the side of the strongest and quickest. It's the place — in the controlled corporate society of 2099 — in which the outcast heroes the X-Men have established their clandestine base of operations.

Las Vegas has long been a symbol of the baser aspects of humanity, and in 2099 it continues to be the nexus of the sins of man. Run by Halloween Jack, Las Vegas has become an independent and surrealistic city-state, with its own rules and bylaws.

When "The Big One" finally hit *California,* early in the century, the quake sent most of the southern section of the state sliding into the sea. However, a portion of Los Angeles survived — as an island. The studio and media moguls of Old Hollywood formed *Lotusland Studios,* a gigantic entertainment and communications corporation responsible for the production of everything the citizens read and watch. Lotusland is also the home base of Hulk 2099.

But America proved to *still* be ripe for the taking, and so Dr. Doom took it.

Now absolute dictator of the country, Doom has disincorporated all previous economical and political holdings. Alchemax, Hellrock, Transverse City, Lotusland, Libera Cielo are no more. Understanding human psychology, Doom has allowed Halloween Jack to continue his nefarious leadership of Las Vegas, which will remain independent within Doom's empire. But even Jack will pay a price for his freedom. It only remains to be seen *how.*

As for the heroes of 2099 in this brave, new world?

Only time will tell.

Writer Mindy Newell, best known for her Catwoman mini-series for DC, has been in the comic industry since 1984 and an editor for Marvel's Special Projects division since 1990. Mindy is currently pursuing her writing career.

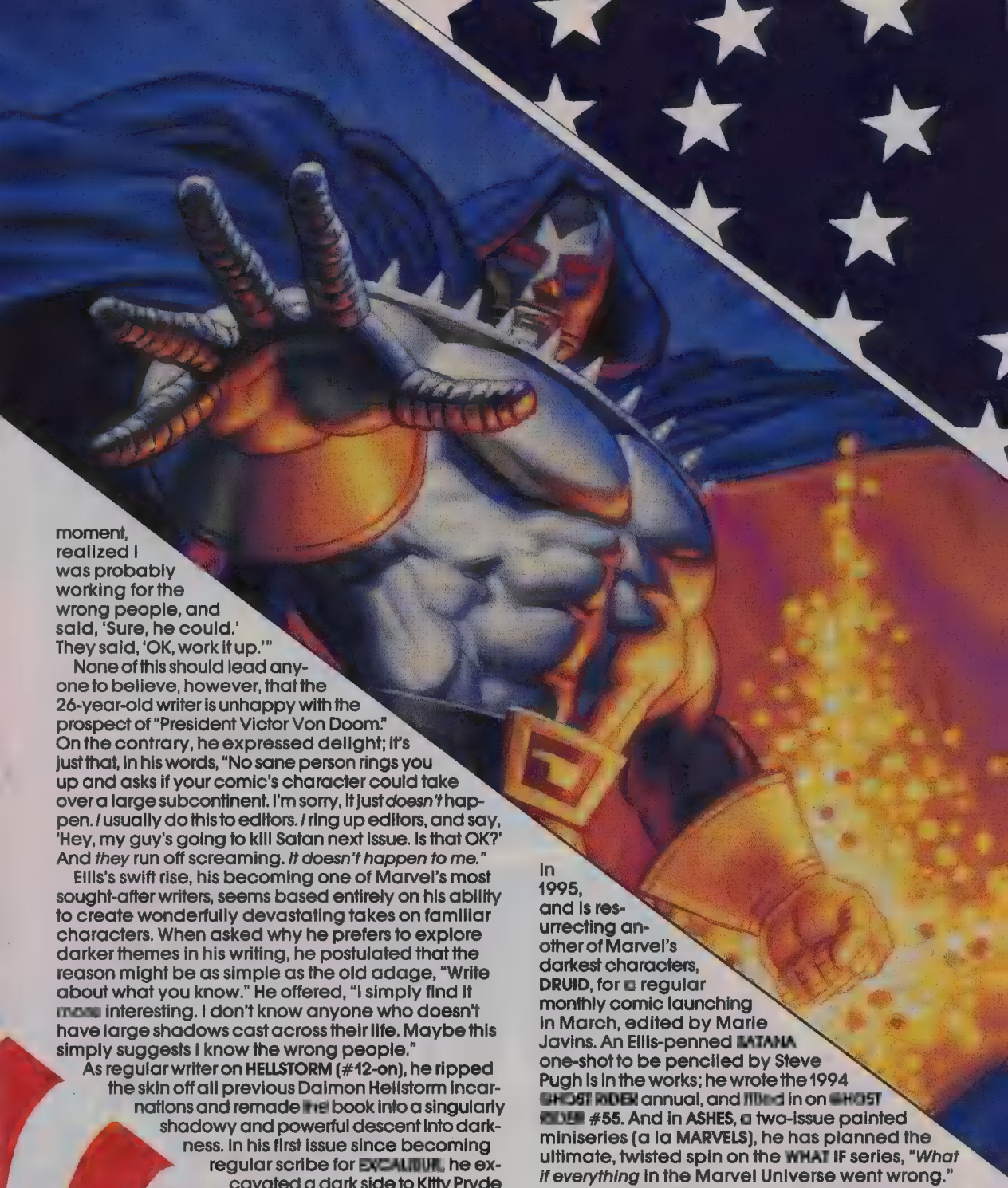
AMERICA, O 'TIS OF

WARREN ELLIS GIVES A GUIDED TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES OF DOOM

For the record, according to **DOOM 2099**'s new writer — Warren Ellis — Dr. Doom's conquest of the United States in 2099 is *not* his fault. *Well, not entirely.*

"For months, everyone has been blaming me for this," he said, his British accent erupting with laughter when he is called the "major architect" of the plot. "At the 2099 [creators'] conference [last year], all the other writers rode in, spoiling for a fight: 'Where is this English guy who hasn't even written an issue of this yet, and he's messing with our lives.' All I said to Joey [Cavalieri, 2099 group editor] when I took over the book was I wanted to make it even more political and apocalyptic. Then he rang me up a few days later saying, 'We've just had one of those Marvel 17-hour business lunches and we've come up with this really great idea; could Doom take over America?' I thought about this for

Warren [illegible] by Steve Pugh



moment, realized I was probably working for the wrong people, and said, 'Sure, he could.' They said, 'OK, work it up.'"

None of this should lead anyone to believe, however, that the 26-year-old writer is unhappy with the prospect of "President Victor Von Doom." On the contrary, he expressed delight; it's just that, in his words, "No sane person rings you up and asks if your comic's character could take over a large subcontinent. I'm sorry, it just *doesn't* happen. I usually do this to editors. I ring up editors, and say, 'Hey, my guy's going to kill Satan next issue. Is that OK?' And *they* run off screaming. *It doesn't happen to me.*"

Ellis's swift rise, his becoming one of Marvel's most sought-after writers, seems based entirely on his ability to create wonderfully devastating takes on familiar characters. When asked why he prefers to explore darker themes in his writing, he postulated that the reason might be as simple as the old adage, "Write about what you know." He offered, "I simply find it more interesting. I don't know anyone who doesn't have large shadows cast across their life. Maybe this simply suggests I know the wrong people."

As regular writer on **HELLSTORM** (#12-on), he ripped the skin off all previous Daimon Hellstorm incarnations and remade the book into a singularly shadowy and powerful descent into darkness. In his first issue since becoming regular scribe for **EXCALIBUR**, he excavated a dark side to Kitty Pryde as the Soul Sword reasserted itself, with America's sweetest mutant as its mistress. He has been entrusted with a four-issue "major re-vamp" of **THOR** coming in 1995, and is resurrecting another of Marvel's darkest characters, **DRUID**, for a regular monthly comic launching in March, edited by Marie Javins. An Ellis-penned **SATANA** one-shot to be pencilled by Steve Pugh is in the works; he wrote the 1994 **GHOST RIDER** annual, and filled in on **GHOST RIDER** #55. And in **ASHES**, a two-issue painted miniseries (a la **MARVELS**), he has planned the ultimate, twisted spin on the **WHAT IF** series, "*What if everything* in the Marvel Universe went wrong."

His list of credits, teamed with his "Metalscream 2099" shorts, in **2099 UNLIMITED**, made Cavalieri's choice of Ellis to write **DOOM 2099** seem a natural. Indeed, Ellis supposed that Cavalieri asked him in the first place, "obviously believing I would have some understanding of a complete megalomaniac bastard."

Whether the U.S. takeover was his idea or not, Ellis's plans for **DOOM 2099** are equally "apocalyptic," and unhampered by the usual need for crossover coordination among writers, he will have a lot of rein to explore them. Only **RAVAGE 2099** will *directly* cross over with one issue of **DOOM 2099**, though every 2099 title will be impacted. Ellis does, though, get a chance to

have fun with guest appearances by Jake Gallows, better known as the Punisher 2099, when Doom appoints him as the head of the "new state-owned" police force, S.H.I.E.L.D. Gallows' title will aptly be "Minister of Punishment," although Ellis said calling the agency S.H.I.E.L.D. was not his idea.

Even before Cavalieri's phone call, Ellis said, he was fascinated by the "political science fiction" elements of the series under first writer John Moore's groundbreaking dominion on the book. All the way back to Doom's origins in the 1960s, Latveria's armored dictator's tendency towards evil — like that of Magneto — has been tempered by shades of gray. And Moore's Doom — or more correctly, the man who believes himself to be Victor Von Doom transported a century into the future — has been portrayed as a visionary genius and anti-hero with questionable motives, rather than as the ruthless super-villain known to most recent Marvel readers.

"Doom, at heart, is a revolutionary, and there's no such thing as a revolutionary who's all bad," Ellis offered. "Even [the French Revolution's] Robespierre had a couple of good ideas. He was a barking lunatic whose hobby was lopping people's heads off, but he had a few good ideas. Doom's very first detailed act in the Marvel Universe was when he took control of Latveria from a bunch of calcified aristocratic types, presumably around the mid-'50s. Doom may do monstrous things, but he is *not* a monster."

As for how his characterization of Doom differs from that of John Moore, he noted, "I basically did my own take on what John had been doing, though John's Doom is probably a lot more mellow than mine. The Doom I'm writing is capable of very, very extreme angst. Sometimes, it's a loss of self-control, but most often it is directed towards getting a reaction. Everything he does is a political act."

Doom's actual takeover of the USA — all jokes aside — Ellis added, was inevitable. All that was necessary was to take the strands of already established action and braid them together. "To be honest, it probably began at the start. There was a structure that John Moore had in his early DOOM 2099s, all through the initial revolution, which was that [Doom] would go to a place for a secret reason. He would have an ostensible reason for visiting, but he would come away with a scrap of knowledge or a piece of technology or some kind of intelligence, and you assumed he was putting it to good use, but you never actually saw it again. I assumed that from the start, once Doom had wrested control of Latveria away from Tyger Wylde, that he had a game plan. The game plan was this — all this intelligence he has been gathering was to be directed towards *one* purpose, *the eventual takeover of America.* The obvious threads are laid in #26, but I consider everything he has done previously to be leading up to this."

At least, the EMPs will run on time.

Ellis's Doom completely ignores the formality of even a mock election; "he assumes the presidency by right of revolution, which can be overturned by Congress. Of course, he thoughtfully has Congress bombed." A "less mellow Doom," however, does not mean that Doom the revolutionary will not be doing some *good* things along the way. Indeed, ironically, Ellis revealed, many of his actions as president may be preferable to the policies of the corporations, like Alchemax, that had run the East Coast cities. "The one thing to remember through all this is Doom can run America better than the Americans can at this point. He's far more benign than this loose conglomerate of mega-corporations could ever be. It's going to be repressive and nasty, and things are going to happen that are going to frighten people — Doom is not a man who engenders trust and comfort in people — but yeah, he's going to do a better

job of running it than the mega-corps ever will."

Indeed, much of Doom's impetus for the overthrow may be environmental. "He is always thinking of Latveria," Ellis explained. "He wants Latveria to survive, but in order for Latveria to survive, he has to save Latveria from the world, which means he has to save the world from itself. He must be the architect of a new peace, and the biggest threat to the continued existence of the planet in 2099 is America. Therefore, he must begin by saving America from itself, actively restructuring the country."

For example, one very visible result of Doom's domination will be the relaunch of a fleet of Environmental Maintenance Platforms (EMPs), seen in earlier issues of DOOM 2099 but discontinued by the corporations. Already in #26, Doom has launched a fleet of these "big, floating things with propellers" over Latveria to monitor the environment, cleanse the air of pollutants, and regulate the climate and ozone layer. The proliferation of EMPs, according to Ellis, "will irreparably change the landscape of America. Every time you look up at a city building, you won't be able to miss these things happening in the sky. Everywhere you look, there will be the sign that Doom has been there."

At Doom's side, so to speak, is his top presidential aide, Wire, who came back from the dead "in fine old comics tradition" in a new body (in #27 — he died in #24). The glib, smart-talking Internet surfer now has two bodies: a physical one into which Doom has revived him, and a cyberspace one. This duality allows him to be Doom's secret link to the other-reality of cyberspace, which in the 2099 universe has advanced to the point that landmass domination means little without a sharp ear to virtual reality.

Unfortunately, Ellis added, Wire has not been unaffected by his own death and rebirth. "He's something of a loose cannon because, unfortunately, he has recently gone completely mad. Thanks to this wonderful 'get out of jail free' card that Duke Stratosphere gave him, he's been existing in cyberspace as mind without meat — pure mind. In the interim, he had been shacking up with Paloma, whom I refer to in my notes as a 'cyber goddess' and probably the most powerful single functioning artificial intelligence within cyberspace. She actually has some kind of supernatural pull upon the physics of cyberspace. Then he's pulled back into a new body in order to become a servant to Doom, and the transfer has left him quite blisteringly insane."

Doom's other main sidekick, Fortune, will fare far worse. Angered at her entering the employ of the cyber-generated Neon Angel (#24), Doom has left her behind to rule Latveria and, according to Ellis, she will stay there for an unspecified future. "He says, 'You've betrayed me, hmmm, what do I do with you? Make too much of a mess to shoot you in here. I know, I'll just leave you behind, and if you do it again, I'll chop your head off or something."

As for Poet, Ellis said only that he is dead, and will remain so. Ellis is no stranger to the cyberpunk alternate reality planes in which Wire and Fortune are caught and to which Doom has traversed several times. Indeed, his first break in comics was a cyberpunk serial called "Virtual Kiss," which appeared in a British newsstand magazine called *Blast*. His first graphic novel/mini-series, *Lazarus Churchyard* (Tundra UK), about a man with a death wish but who could not die, also displayed a cyberpunk edge. And some other cyberpunkish "strips" he wrote four years ago will finally be printed in an upcoming issue of *Heavy Metal*.

"I followed the old 'Mirrorshades' movement for years," he said, referring to a groundbreaking fiction anthology that has become synonymous with the cyberpunk literary movement led by science fiction writer William Gibson *(Neuromancer)*. "They continue to be an influence, but cyberpunk has become so generic now that I'm constantly trying to find new notes to strike with it, trying to find new takes on it."

Forget America. Ellis takes over Marvel Comics.

His influences, however, are much wider. In terms of comics, as a child, he read mostly British-produced material, but he was aware of the Fantastic Four and Dr. Doom. He remembers in particular British comics versions of U.S. TV shows like *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

"When British artists and writers got hold of these characters, something different happened. They were utterly drug-soaked, absolutely psychedelic, very strange takes on traditional TV characters." Then in 1977, on his ninth birthday, the first issue of Britain's quintessential dark, futuristic adventure comic — *2000 AD* — hit newsstands, starring Judge Dredd.

Like fellow British comics writers Alan *[Watchmen]* Moore and Neil *[Sandman, Alice Cooper]* Gaiman, Ellis's influences run the entire creative gamut. "It's a case of leaving yourself open to absolutely everything, reading voraciously and anything, absolutely anything," he stressed. "If you read only science fiction, you're not going to write good science fiction. You have to read everything. Just look at what I've got on the desk here — a book on the Mafia super-trials, a book on film noir, and a book of Lester Bangs' music journalism — and all three of those have actually ended up in the last two **DOOM** scripts. I think the big trick in writing is probably not to concentrate exclusively on writing. If you can't bring something from real life into your work, then you're not a writer, you're probably just a typist."

Indeed, one of Ellis's ambitions at some point is to actually pen a book on how to write comics. "There are a couple out here [in England], but somehow they've managed not to have been written by people who write comics professionally. Something like that might have some use. It might just be utter arrogance talking, but it strikes me that if there is to be a book on writing comics, then maybe it should be written by someone who writes comics professionally rather than some wannabe working out of a shed somewhere."

Ellis actually prefers to write full script versus "Marvel-style," in which a writer creates a plot, the penciler draws the pages and sends them back to the writer, who then writes the script. For all his Marvel projects, including **DOOM 2099**, he makes the full-script style a condition upon his taking on the assignment, although he invites his artists to discuss any point with him, he said. The language barrier unfortunately prevented Ellis from having the collaboration he would have liked with Argentinean Leonardo Manco on **HELLSTORM**, but he said that he would like to have a closer contact with **DOOM 2099** artist Pat Broderick. "*Not* having contact with artists is something I'm not used to. If I have asked for something that can't be drawn, I'd like it if the artist rung me up and said, 'I can't draw this; no one can draw this — can we do this instead?' Then we could work something out."

Because Moore did his run on **DOOM 2099** in Marvel style, however, Ellis did end up scripting two issues [#24 and #25] that he did not plot. The funny thing, Ellis observed, was that he had already written #26 and #27, so it was like going backwards. "[John] had run out of time for the dialoging phase, and at that point I was pretty much the only other person who had written **DOOM**. They asked me to basically pinch-hit for John and produce the dialogue for those two issues, which was hellishly difficult. I had only worked Marvel-style twice before, but because the plot and art had already been produced, these pages were just sitting there waiting for the dialogue stage. It was weird. The idea of actually writing the dialogue for someone else's story was new for me."

Ellis's career has been one of hard work and dues, and recently as 1992, things were not so good for him. Even during his first breaks with "Virtual Kiss" and *Lazarus Churchyard*, he says he was barely scraping by to make a living from his writing. Before that, in the mid-to-late '80s, he held what he describes as "all the disgusting jobs that look so good on the dust-jacket of the first novel. You always see a picture of some big manly writer, 19-stone [266 lb.] in a lumberjack shirt, and there's a list of his jobs — toilet cleaner, dung shoveler. It's like the writer has had this marvelous life

of privation and danger and all before they settled down and became a writer. I've done all that, stacked peat and dung for a living, ran a bar. . ."

When a bookshop he was managing went out of business in 1990, he fortuitously sold his first written work to a small British independent comics publisher called Trident. "I thought, 'I'm not going back on the dole' [British equivalent of welfare], because I'd already done two years on the dole and it's soul-crushing," he recalled. "'To hell with it, I'm either going to make a living off the writing or I'm going to starve and die.' So I starved and nearly died for two years or so."

His first hint at what it was like to have even meager financial security was when he sold *Lazarus Churchyard* to Tundra UK in 1991, but the young company was unable to make a satisfactory profit and swiftly went out of business. Ellis found himself calling up every comics connection he could think of, willing to do any work that was available. Just when he was resigned to having to take another dead-end job, he received a call from DC Comics Editor Archie Goodwin asking to buy a Batman story he had submitted two years before. "On the strength of that, I rang up Marvel," he said. "I got my first job from Marvel, and things have snowballed from there."

Ironically, that first Marvel assignment — an eight-page short for an AKIRA tribute one-shot — never saw print, but Ellis has had no complaints. After all, he is getting to play with some of the most popular comics characters in the business. For example, one of the most fun aspects of working on EXCALIBUR has been getting to mess up the characters caught in the chaos of the recent "Age of Apocalypse" plotline. "I got to do something with Nightcrawler that occurred to me as soon as I started writing the character," he said. "[It was] one of those stupid little ideas that occur to you at two in the morning — why doesn't he use his teleportation as a weapon. At one point, someone is picking a fight with him, and someone waves a finger at him. He grabs that finger and then teleports five feet away taking the finger with him. It would seem to me very obvious."

Today Ellis lives in a house built in the 1920s that he bought recently in Southend-on-Sea — a seaside resort town just south of London in the county of Essex. He lives there with his girlfriend and "three cats, two rats, a chipmunk, two rabbits, and a guinea pig, all of which are hers." At the time of the interview it wasn't quite as late as the Nightcrawler brainstorm, but nearly midnight as he was sitting at his desk, still planning a few more hours of writing before turning in. "I very rarely start work before midday, and for the last two weeks I haven't finished much before two in the morning."

As for Doom, the man behind the armor and mask in 2099, he is unsure of his identity — an issue which Ellis says he'll leave hanging until at least issue #38 — "as far as I'm concerned, he's convinced he's Victor Von Doom, and that's good enough for me." Warren Ellis, however, is certain that he is a writer, and while two novels he has planned and possible forays into television script-writing and journalism remain goals for the future, for now he will be developing his own dark take on Doom and whichever other Marvel characters get thrown his way.

Freelance journalist Anya Martin has interviewed numerous literary purveyors of darkness from Clive Barker to Anne Rice. Her essay on the rock'n'roll/horror connection, "Rocking the Midnight Hour" will be featured in Splatterpunks II: Over the Edge. HOR, UK

DRESSING THE TROOPS

ONE NATION UNDER DOOM necessitates a frightening new atmosphere for the 2099 books. Group Editor Joey Cavalieri and Associate Editor Matt Morra began a search for an artist who could design the intimidating "neo-fascist" costumes of Jake (The Punisher) Gallows, S.H.I.E.L.D. troops, and members of the Punishment Police. They wanted someone who has, according to Morra, "a sense of evil; someone who could make it look *rude*."

During a 2099 writers' conference, writer Pat Mills suggested Kevin O'Neill, with whom he had produced *Metalzoic* for DC and MARSHAL LAW for Epic, Marvel's creator-owned imprint. "Joey and I instantly agreed," Morra said. "Nobody can make evil look more evil than Kevin O'Neill. It's a God-given gift."

The editors' instincts proved correct. "As soon as we opened the package [of O'Neill's initial sketches], we knew we hired the right man. He brings to this a wonderful design sense. Forget super hero; he's got a different slant on things," Morra noted.

Kevin O'Neill's background differs from many comic book artists. Born just outside of London in Eltham, England in 1953, he grew up drawing as a hobby and dreamed of a career in comics *animation*. He was never formally trained as an artist, but took a job in the seventies as an office boy in the comics division of IPC Magazine, a British publishing conglomerate. There, he eventually worked on humor strips and was introduced to Mills, the creator of a weekly comic called *2000 A.D.* They hit it off and teamed up to freelance for two other comics, *Ro-Busters* and *Nemesis Warlock*.

During a phone conversation, O'Neill discussed his approach to designing the new look for Jake Gallows, the Punishment Police, and for the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* agents of 2099.

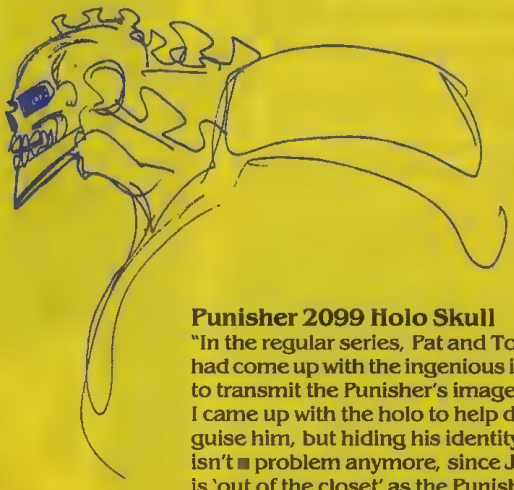
EARLY CONCEPT SKETCHES AND EVOLUTION

Punishment Police (early sketch)

"We're not going with this one, unfortu nately. I thought it would be funny to have a uniform with instructions flashing 'stop, go, freeze.' I thought it would be great fun if graphics were to pop up, also, for the hearing impaired. I wanted to use 'Yield for Shield' in this one for old times sake."

Punisher 2099 Battle Suit

"This is an early try of playing around with the Punisher logo on his chest; the eyes are sort of coming out of his ribs. I tried putting the skull in other places — on his shoulder, for example — but if you take the skull off his chest, he's not Jake Gallows anymore. He's just another foot soldier then. [There's also] ■ skull motif on the boot, but it seems too coordinated. It gets almost camp."

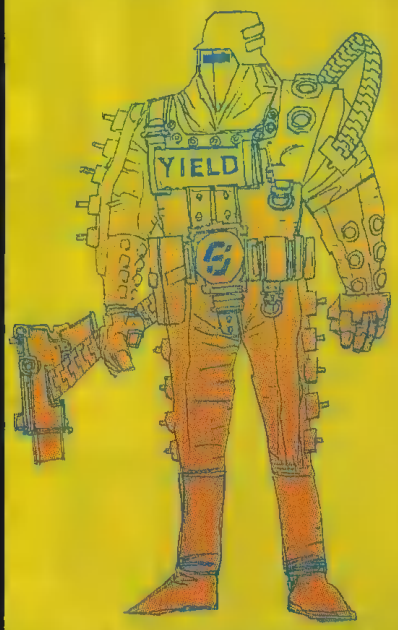


Punisher 2099 Holo Skull

"In the regular series, Pat and Tony had come up with the ingenious idea to transmit the Punisher's image, so I came up with the holo to help disguise him, but hiding his identity isn't ■ problem anymore, since Jake is 'out of the closet' as the Punisher."

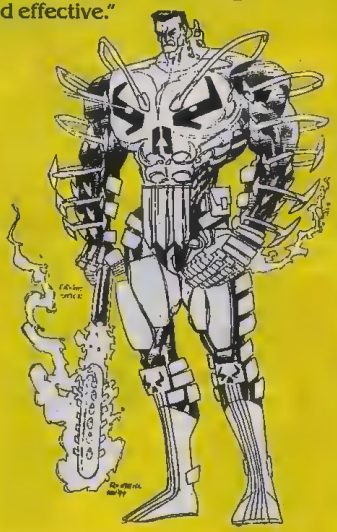
Shield Foot Soldier

"I based this on the guys who clean up toxic spills and just played around with that image, but Marvel wants their characters to have ■ skin-tight look. Matt thought it was too complicated."



Punisher 2099

"This is the first proper sketch I did of Jake, but it didn't have the imagery you needed for the head of the Punishment Police. He doesn't look like the head of *anything;* he just looks like a psychopath out on his own. The hoop idea was to cage him in, protect him during battle. The hoops would retract when he was just standing around, but it didn't work. It was too unwieldy. I like the fright stick. I think it could look good and effective."



Punishment Police Officer

"I worked this one up because I thought some of the Punishment Police would be officers — they wouldn't all be infantrymen. I have no idea if Matt is using this, but I thought it would add some detail to the Punishment Police, and I think the SS imagery would work quite well. German soldiers in the last war had gas masks on their belts, so I thought if [the Punishment Police] had something that looked radioactive in the same place, it would be really effective. The riding crop in his hand is also a Nazi image — it's just another way of intimidating people. The stiff collar was popular in eighteen and nineteenth century military costumes. It enables even a geeky looking guy to carry it off."

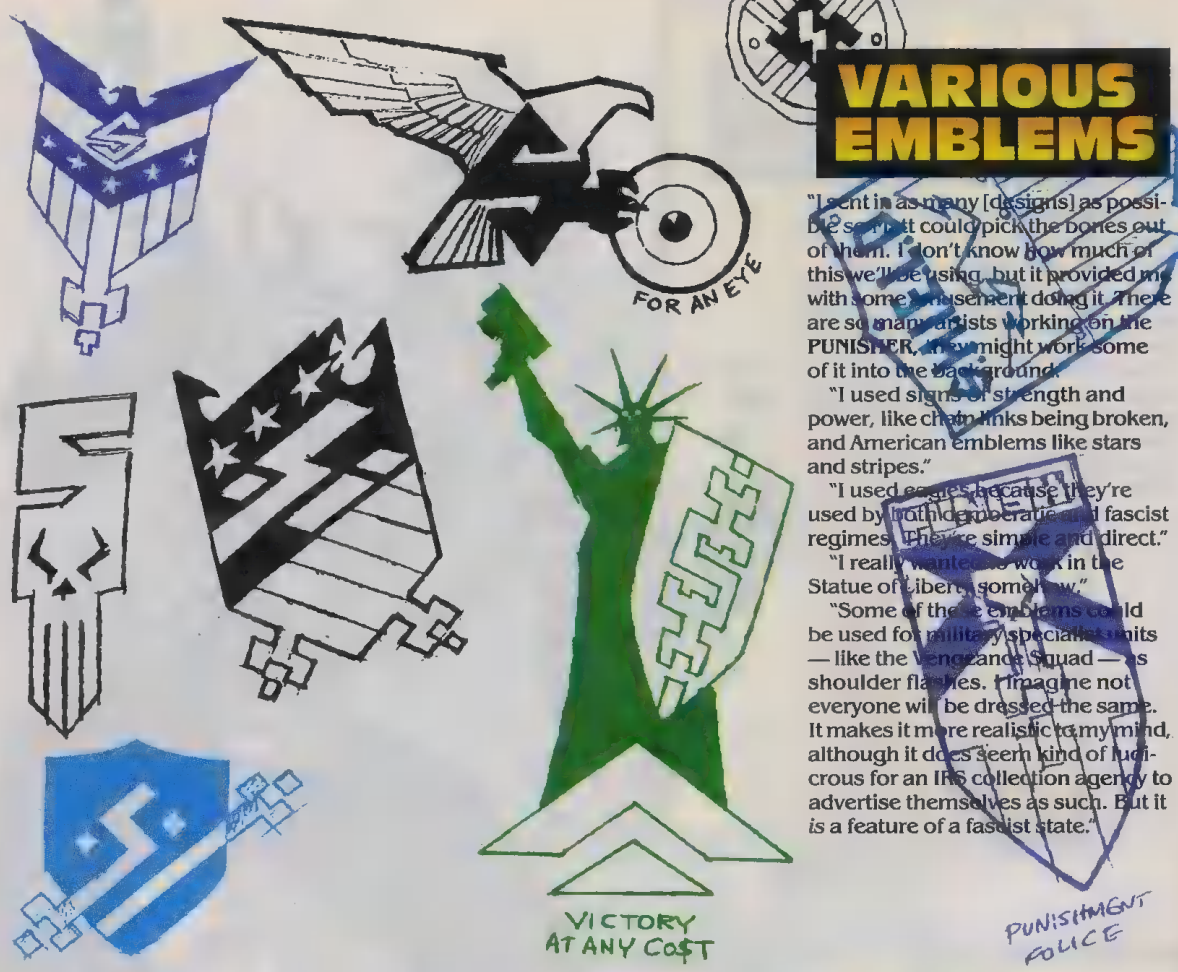
APPROVED COSTUMES AND LATEST DESIGNS

SHIELD Foot Soldier

"The original version didn't have jack boots, but Matt was obsessed about getting them all in jack boots — including Jake Gallows. The fact that the 'S' is gigantic [on the chest] is showing off. It's enforcing law and order by fear alone; these guys register from half a mile away. The visor-like shield [on the helmet] is menacing. It's quite sinister when you can't see human features."

Punishment Police

"This is much more simplified than the one I originally sent in. Matt thought too many emblems or detail might be too much in action. I used the Nazi helmet with a horn sticking out of it because I thought it was sinister, and I worked up the Punishment Police logo by using a 'P' and its mirror image, which resembles a skull to link it to the Jake Gallows character. The bands on his arms break up the uniform in an interesting way; they're more for effect than for practical use."



VARIOUS EMBLEMS

"I sent in as many [designs] as possible so Matt could pick the bones out of them. I don't know how much of this we'll be using, but it provided me with some amusement doing it. There are so many artists working on the PUNISHER, they might work some of it into the background.

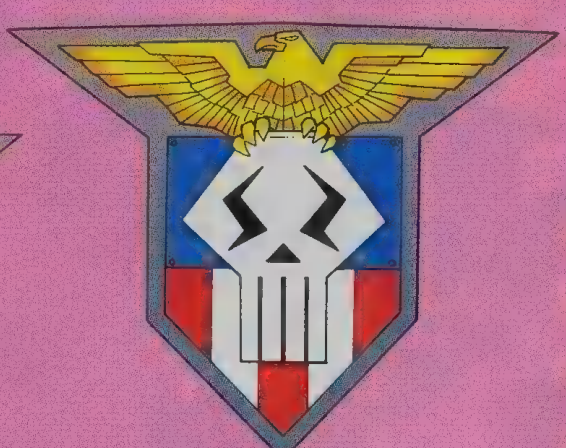
"I used signs of strength and power, like chain links being broken, and American emblems like stars and stripes."

"I used eagles because they're used by both democratic and fascist regimes. They're simple and direct."

"I really wanted to work in the Statue of Liberty somehow."

"Some of these emblems could be used for military specialist units — like the Vengeance Squad — as shoulder flashes. I imagine not everyone will be dressed the same. It makes it more realistic to my mind, although it does seem kind of ludicrous for an IRS collection agency to advertise themselves as such. But it *is* a feature of a fascist state."

APPROVED EMBLEMS

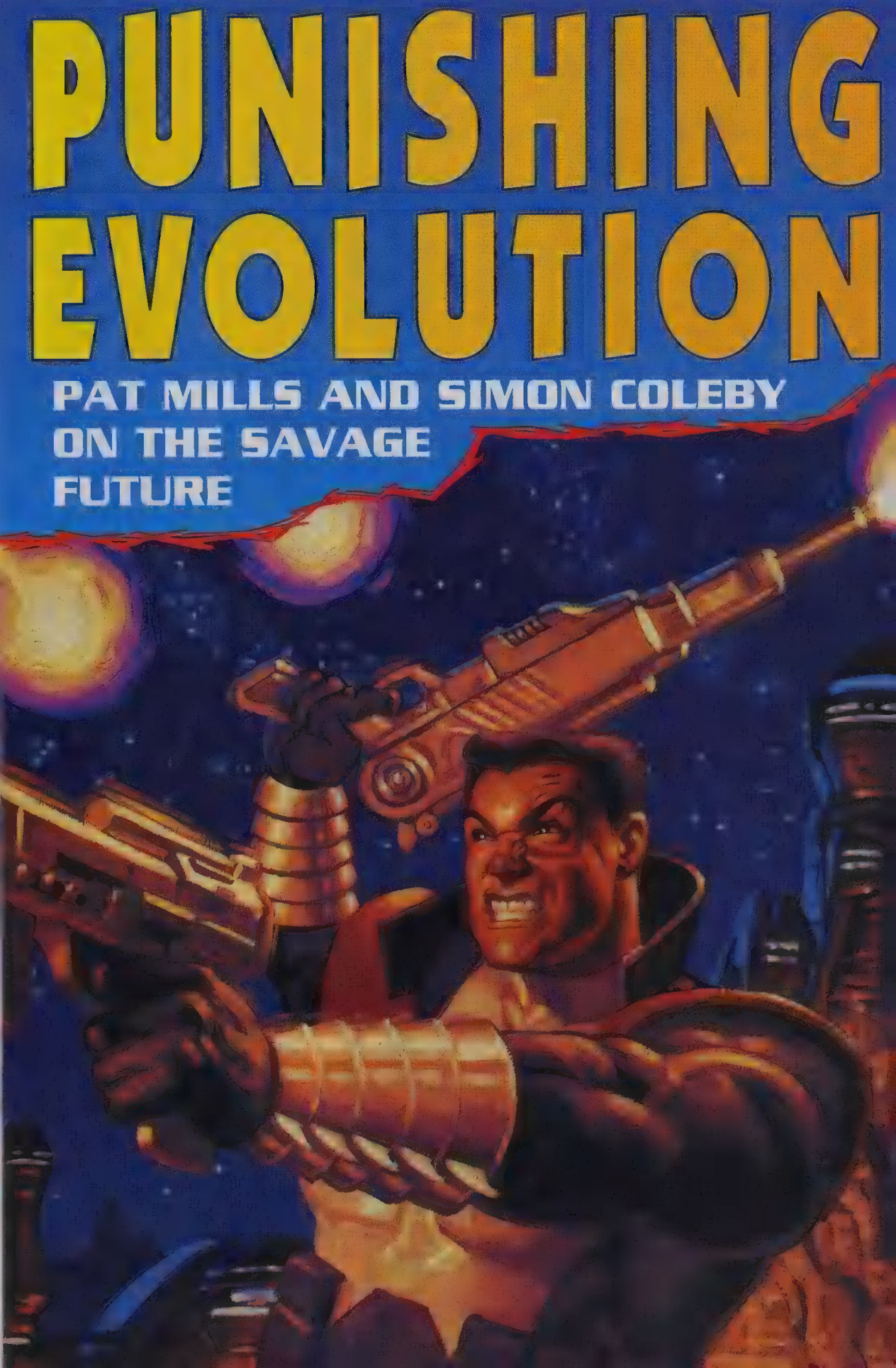


"These aren't particularly flamboyant, but they work. The eagle on top with its talons around the skull and the 'S' binds the Punishment Police and S.H.I.E.L.D. together. To design these I looked at the S.H.I.E.L.D. emblem from the '60s, which seemed graphically lost, so I brought it back to a badge-like graphic."

In addition to writing for Collectors' Previews, **Terry Hernon** *also writes short stories and is mother to a five-month-old baby named Maggie MacDonald.*

PUNISHING EVOLUTION

PAT MILLS AND SIMON COLEBY ON THE SAVAGE FUTURE

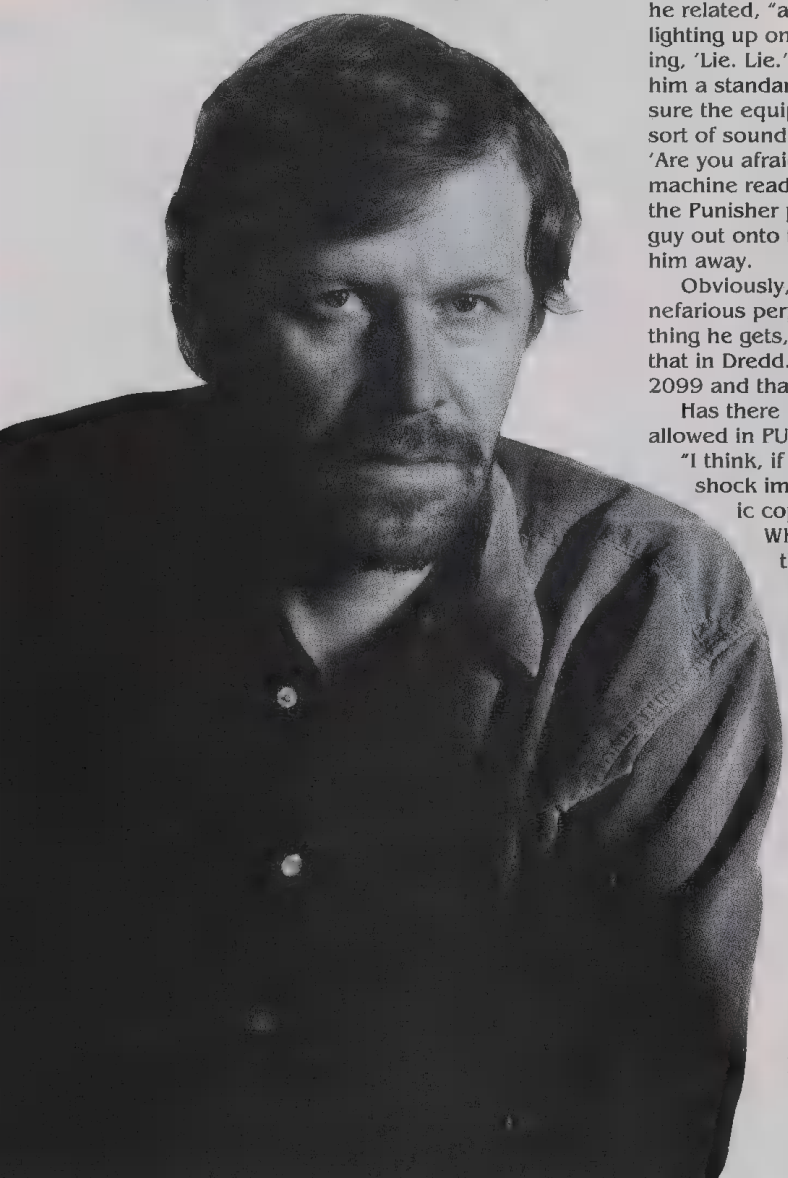


PUNISHER 2099 and RAVAGE 2099 co-writer Pat Mills has been writing comics for nearly a quarter of ■ century. He co-created Judge Dredd (with fellow Englishman John Wagner) and Marshall Law (with artist Kevin O'Neill). He was also one of the original architects of the 2099 Universe, co-creating the futuristic version of the Punisher with long-time writing partner Tony Skinner. Pat discussed his fascination with futuristic super-cops, collaborating with Tony, his feelings on being ■ co-founder of the 2099 Universe, and its evolution since.

AND THE WINNER IS...

"I find the idea of apocalyptic cops to be quite interesting," Pat admitted. Although both the futuristic Punisher and Judge Dredd "share ■ common root, they are quite different."

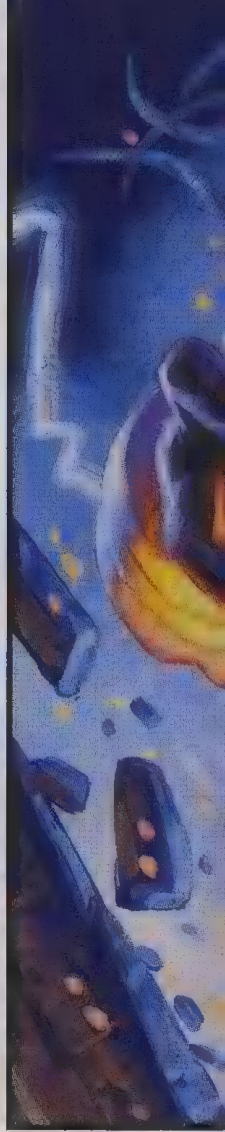
Ironically, Judge Dredd's original incarnation was toned *down*, even though the title was meant to be an over-the-top satire written with tongue firmly implanted in cheek. "There were things that I wanted to say in *Dredd* that I couldn't," Pat explained. "The original idea of Dredd was ■ guy who executed people on the spot as an example to all the other citizens. The board wouldn't allow us to do that. It was ■ rather shocking idea for its time. Somehow, in the 1990's, it seems a bit closer to reality than it did in the seventies."



With PUNISHER 2099, Pat is able to do the things he was unable to do in Dredd. For example, the idea of an instant lie detector–a device slapped on the head of a suspected criminal was one that Pat could see fitting comfortably in the world of Judge Dredd, but it was an idea he never got around to with the character. Yet, even if he had, the outcome of its use would have been quite different than that portrayed in PUNISHER 2099.

"This guy's lying his head off," he related, "and there's ■ sign lighting up on his forehead reading, 'Lie. Lie.' The Punisher asks him a standard question to make sure the equipment is working, ■ sort of sound check. He asks him, 'Are you afraid of me?' and the machine reads, 'True. True.' So the Punisher proceeds to drag the guy out onto the street and blow him away.

Obviously, he is a suitably nefarious perp and deserves everything he gets, but we couldn't do that in Dredd. We can in PUNISHER 2099 and that's good."



Has there been anything *not* allowed in PUNISHER 2099?

"I think, if anything, Marvel really wanted the shock impact of this kind of considerably demonic cop," Pat replied. "They wanted that, 'Wow! Who is this guy?' kind of thing. I cannot think of anything that (co-writer Tony Skinner and I) would want to do that Marvel would say 'No' to. We would never have gratuitous violence or anything for the sake of it. What we want and what (Editor Joey Cavalieri and Associate Editor Matt Morra) want is roughly the same thing, which is this way-over-the-top supercop of the future."

Yet, is the difference between the Punisher of the future and the character of today's Marvel Universe simply the setting in which each version is placed?

Pat acknowledges that the "high-tech world in which the Punisher dwells is certainly ■ key." He also pointed to several "soap-opera" elements within the title that remove it from its present-day Marvel counterpart.

Recently a trainee female Punisher character was introduced. Pat has used this character to illustrate how one would become a super-cop if one were not quite as insanely driven as Jake Gallows. He likened the situation to that of the X-MEN characters who are also destined–albeit by their mutant powers–to become something that, by virtue of their personalities, they may not be.

"It isn't just Jake Gallows, this way-over-the-top walking human arsenal," Pat explained. "You've also got a relatively gentler character who wants to be tough and be able to do all these things, and how she goes about achieving that. So there is that soap opera element.

There are other ongoing elements, like the conflict between (The Punisher) and Matt Axel–supposedly his high-tech sidekick but rapidly becoming the Dr. Frankenstein for the monster of Jake Gallows."

Pat stressed that he would have a great deal of difficulty writing a "straight in-and-out action drama" because of his love of digging deep inside a character to find out what makes them tick. "I believe the Punisher of today is much more a straightforward vigilante where the emphasis is more on the action rather than the supporting cast."

IN THE BEGINNING...

There is a closeness one gets from being an original architect of something like the 2099 Universe, an intimacy Pat could not have enjoyed had he taken over a title within the present-day Marvel Universe. "If I had done a regular Marvel book," he explained, "there would be this tremendous feeling of always looking over my shoulder at all these past greats and of not being well-acquainted with the Marvel Universe, not knowing things that had happened in the past.

"It's one thing to read it all in a story log," he continued. It's quite another to have actually gone through that phase of Marvel's history. So it's very satisfying being in on the ground floor of something. You don't have to look to the past for anything. You can come in straight."

One title on which Pat did not "come in straight," was RAVAGE 2099, another of the titles he writes with

Tony Skinner. Pat and Tony took up the reins of RAVAGE from Stan Lee who took the character through countless changes and upheavals during his short eight-issue stint.

"RAVAGE was a difficult one," Pat confessed. "(Tony and I) felt that we couldn't really follow Stan's approach, because that was unique to Stan. We had to come with something that was more right for us, but still had something in harmony with the original character."

So Pat and Tony built up the background of the character, added some soap opera elements, and what originally seemed difficult–sometimes to the extent that only their British stubbornness kept them going–became a lot of fun. Pat and Tony soon dropped the soap opera side of the story.

"The whole beast thing got very interesting for us, especially with the new artist (Simon Coleby)," he explained, "and it seemed, ultimately, that we had to go beyond the soap opera into this beast wandering across America. It seemed the strongest element. In a strange way, the character has gone full circle as he eventually comes across some of the villains he met at the beginning of Stan's saga. So there's a pleasant integration at the end."

Pat enjoys the freedom that comes with something totally unencumbered by limitations created by something supposedly taking place in the world of today. He cited the types of villains the futuristic Punisher takes on; although he admits to there being "a smattering of street punks" much like those who face today's Punisher, the emphasis is on corporate villains. "More the kind of people, personally, I'd like to see blown away," he admitted. "I'm not sure one would have the same freedom in the regular Marvel Universe."

And the 2099 Universe evolves. "One thing with Marvel is that there is a constant feeling of evolution. There isn't a feeling of stasis, of things standing still," Pat explained. "There's always something new around the corner. Generally speaking that is a good thing. It keeps things lively."

Although he sees the evolution of the 2099 Universe as a "reasonably gentle one," Pat feels that there is still a feeling of forward momentum, and the books are heading in the direction that he and his co-founders had envisioned. "In broad terms, this is how we saw the whole 2099 Universe thing going, although we had no idea that it would reach this particular point with Doom taking over, and so forth, but it's very much in line with the original feeling of the Universe. It has built on what has gone on before and has been pretty consistent."

Pat cited the tight team of writers and artists as being instrumental to this consistency.

"AH, YES, I REMEMBER IT WELL"

One of those writers is collaborator Tony Skinner, who helps Pat pen both PUNISHER 2099 and RAVAGE 2099. Pat admits to their collaboration as being a "very integrated process," but still a great deal of fun. Pat has worked with partners before, but never with as much creative satisfaction.

"The key to it is that we have a shared jaundiced viewpoint of the world," he confessed. "We are similar in our opinions in the kinds of movies we like and our opinions on the world at large, so there isn't any of that usual creator conflict as to what should happen with the characters.

"We both find the extreme nature of the characters personally amusing," he continued. "The people who tend to be on the receiving end of Ravage's claws or the Punisher's enormous magnum tend to be people we would like to see dealt with. So we have a lot of fun with that; we think, 'Yeah, let's see this creep blown away!'

Tony's forte is his facility with the high-tech aspects of the universe. Pat brings his familiarity with dramatic storytelling. According to Pat they have yet to "run out of ideas or (think), 'What the hell is going to happen with this character next?!'"

The two writers meet in a cafe, usually in France, and discuss what is to happen in the books. Then one of them–most often Pat, as he types faster–sits at the word processor while they hammer out what they had discussed.

Pat finds the method to be "a very fast way of working" and finds that the collaborative process in general prevents procrastination and writer's block, because when one of them gets stuck the other is there to pick up the creative slack.

"I find it to be a diverting way of writing," he explained. "It takes the loneliness out of it. I have this half-baked theory that writing alone in a garret somewhere may be appropriate for a personal project, but there is perhaps something slightly suspect about it. Storytelling, originally, was a much more communal event–around the fireside or whatever. Two people telling each other stories may not be a direct facsimile of that, but it does have elements of that old-fashioned social style of storytelling. So it does tend to be much more friendly.

"I don't know about writers," he continued, "but I know that there are many artists who have become casualties of the loneliness of their work. In the past, there would be periods when I was writing alone, where I felt cut off and withdrawn. Working with a partner makes you a little bit more human."

SIMON COLEBY: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

PUNISHER 2099 penciler Simon Coleby began his work on the futuristic vigilante less than a year ago. His previous work included DEATH'S HEAD for Marvel UK, which he took over after the departure of Liam Sharp. He had only completed four issues of that series before samples of his work caught the eye of PUNISHER 2099 Associate Editor Matt Morra. Simon was surprised, but delighted by the chance to work in the 2099 Universe and says that it "has been fun ever since."

Although the character struck Simon as interesting, it was the world in which the Punisher lives that really excited him. "I liked the idea of working on the futuristic settings, a futuristic New York City," he explained. "I enjoy drawing backgrounds. I like trying to define an atmosphere through the backgrounds.

With a strong lead character like the Punisher, it's a great challenge."

Simon's fascination with backgrounds can be attributed to his father, who is an architect. Because of this, he has a certain interest in the design of buildings. "I don't know if it comes across to any great extent, but it is something which is important to me–the way the backgrounds work in relation to the figures. I guess I shoot for that kind of thing."

So does this mean that all the buildings which Simon draws are structurally sound and could exist in the real world?

"I wouldn't go that far," he replied with a laugh. "My dad used to criticize me more when I was drawing in the real universe. He'd pick out architectural details and point out where I'd done things wrong. He'd look at it and say, 'That window is wrong. You can't have a window, like that.' Once, he told me how to draw a bay window because I couldn't.

"He knows all the architectural theory of building structure," he continued. "I just appreciate the aesthetics more. Now, with PUNISHER 2099, he cannot argue. He'd say, 'That building would fall over,' and I'd just say, "Yeah, but you don't know what it's made out of, Dad."

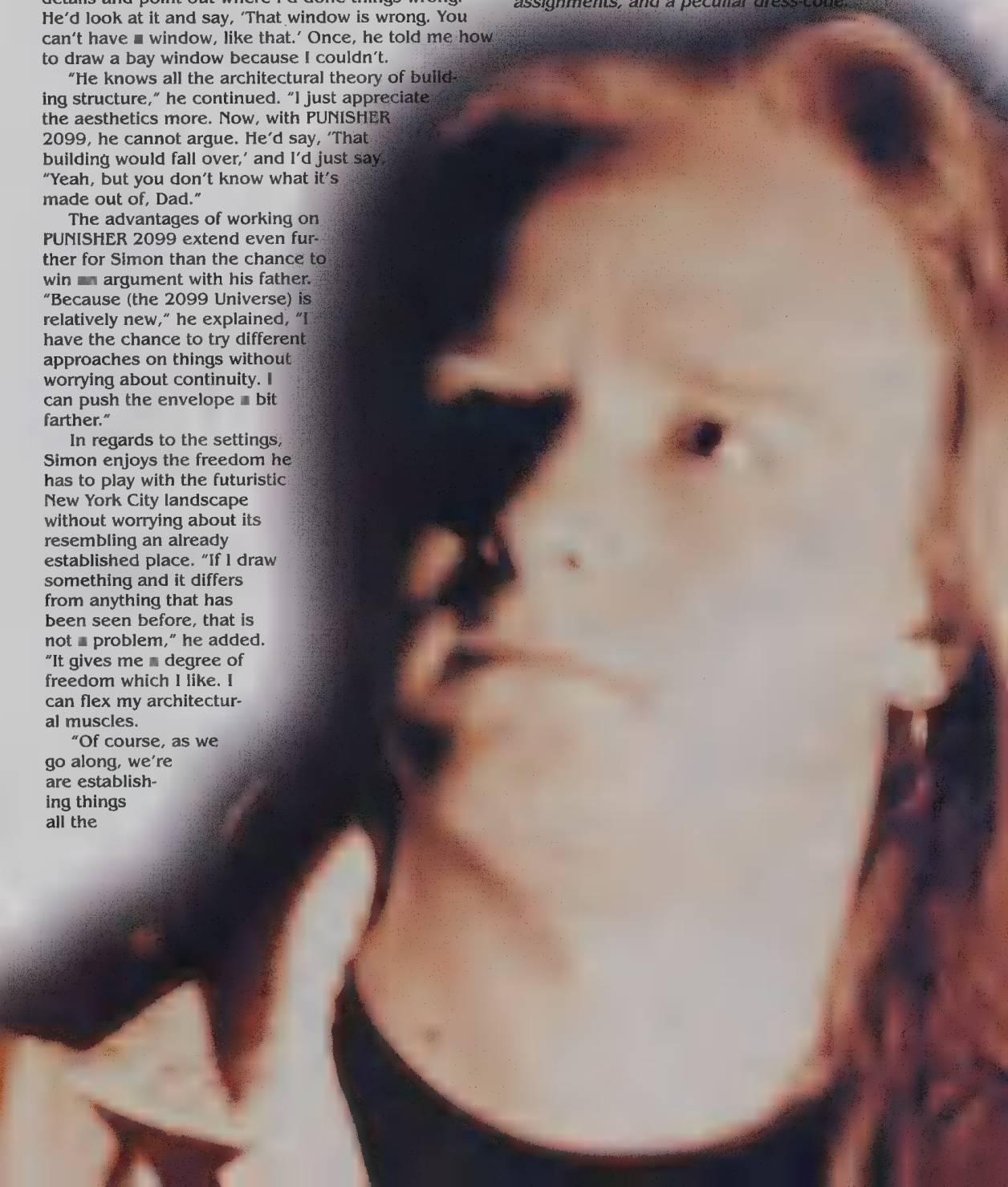
The advantages of working on PUNISHER 2099 extend even further for Simon than the chance to win an argument with his father. "Because (the 2099 Universe) is relatively new," he explained, "I have the chance to try different approaches on things without worrying about continuity. I can push the envelope a bit farther."

In regards to the settings, Simon enjoys the freedom he has to play with the futuristic New York City landscape without worrying about its resembling an already established place. "If I draw something and it differs from anything that has been seen before, that is not a problem," he added. "It gives me a degree of freedom which I like. I can flex my architectural muscles.

"Of course, as we go along, we're are establishing things all the time. It's inevitable and, as things sort of grow, the continuity grows itself. I think that is quite a good thing."

And what are Simon's feelings on those artists who, in the future, must try to emulate the continuity he has established? "I'm going to be giving people nightmares, aren't I?" he replied with a laugh. "I hope (any future artists) won't be able to draw my stuff, because then Marvel will have to get me in to draw them again. That'll keep me in work for awhile. I'm not doing this by accident. This is deliberate stuff!"

Recently engaged writer Stephen Vrattos *hopes his wife-to-be understands the value of a husband's career that involves odd hours, unusual freelance assignments, and a peculiar dress-code.*



MOORE'S MUTANT FUTURES

"I like to think of **X-Men 2099** as my own little fiefdom. The characters live in the southwest away from the mainstream **2099** universe. They seldom interact with the other heroes," John Moore revealed.

But Moore is one of the chief architects of the **2099** universe. He has written **X-Men 2099**, with art by Ron Lim, since its inception, and Moore was the writer of most of **Doom 2099 #1-25.**

"I've always felt that one of the problems of the Marvel and DC universes was that too many people knew each other. In our world, people can live next door to each other for 30 years and never have their lives intersect. Yet in the Marvel universe, every super hero knows every *other* super hero. Villains try to rob the same bank at the same time. Every character's life is tangentially connected to everyone else's. This seems odd to me," Moore said.

"In the year **2099**, America is geographically balkanized thanks to corporate control. Each region has its own views and attitudes that have caused rifts in the country as a whole. These rifts created a kind of isolationism between each area. That's why, until Doom takes over

America, the X-Men have had little to do with the corporate infrastructure that makes up the government," he elaborated. "The X-Men of 2099 wouldn't fit into Alchemax's New York. They're unconcerned with the happenings in Latveria, because they don't have any effect on them."

Ron Lim also enjoys the isolation of the series.

"**X-Men 2099** is fun for me because I get to create the look of the entire series. John and I discuss what's needed and then I pretty much have free rein as far as visuals go. I don't have to worry about how Valhalla looks in **Doom 2099**. I don't have to worry about how someone else has drawn a character before me. The isolationism allows me to be very creative," Lim said.

The X-Men's isolationism changes, however, when Doom takes over America with the "World of Doom" storyline.

ATTACK ON THE THEATER OF PAIN

"After the takeover, Doom discovers a dirty little secret that is talked about only in America's underbelly — an underground organization called The Red Market," Moore explained The Red Market is a slavery ring that deals in people as a commodity. It specializes in the sale of mutants to many organizations, including Brimstone Love's Theatre of Pain. Doom decides to shut the Market down in order to reap the profit for himself.

"The Theatre of Pain will be *very* unhappy with Doom's destruction of the Red Market, in that the market is their source for much of the fodder for their sick and twisted experimentation. When Doom starts breaking it up, Brimstone Love, the leader of the Theatre of Pain, is very upset. This takes the Theatre to a new level of sadism and sets up the beginning of X'ian's redemption," Moore said.

For those coming in late, Xi'an is the founder of X-Men 2099. Prior to forming the X-Men, Xi'an was the leader of the outlaw gang known as "The Lawless," during which time he was known to be one of the meanest and nastiest mutants on the planet, his left hand destroying all it touched.

When Xi'an founded the X-Men, his evil side seemed to be subverted. His mutant ability even manifested itself as a new power, a healing touch in his *right* hand. However Xi'an's evil side had not gone away. Xi'an was haunted by visions of his former self, until he had to unleash his subverted evil side to save himself from the mental attacks of Dr. Zhao (in **X-MEN 2099 #9**).

With his evil side in control, Xi'an became less interested in the X-Men's mission to find Avalon — the hidden city where many of Earth's mutants are rumored to have escaped.

Instead he has taken on a renewed bloodlust; a bloodlust that has attracted Brimstone Love.

"Love recruited Xi'an for the Theatre of Pain and X'ian's evil side loves it," Moore said, "Now it's up to Skullfire to rally the team and save X'ian. Skullfire, who is also known as Tim, was captured and tortured by the Theatre's Controller 13 and La Lunatica, who was controlled by the Controller. Tim and Luna have gotten together on a romantic level and so Tim wants to destroy the Theatre for what it did to him, to save Xi'an and to redeem Luna. Tim has become the X-Men's new leader, rallying them together to save X'ian."

I LIKE TO THINK OF THE X-MEN AS MY OWN LITTLE FIEFDOM.

MADNESS AT THE OASIS

Greg and Tim Hildebrandt are two of the most lauded fantasy artists of our time. They have created book covers, movie posters, calendars, trading cards — including the acclaimed *1994 Marvel Masterpieces* — and even award-winning documentary films. But these twins, born in 1939, have *never* painted a comic book, until now.

Late this spring the Hildebrandts will team up with writer John Moore to create *OASIS*, a 64-page, fully-painted graphic novel featuring the X-MEN 2099.

OASIS will focus on Shakti, the X-Man who has the extraordinary strategic ability to detect other mutants. She and the other members of the team will be lured to a biosphere paradise located in the middle of the American desert, where they encounter The Architect, a villain who is to be revealed as someone from Shakti's past.

FROM TERRY TO TOLKIEN

"Working on a comic book is a dream come true," Greg Hildebrandt said. "We grew up on comic strips and comic books and have worked on the periphery of the industry for years, but have never actually done a comic until now. We've always wanted to; there just never seemed to be enough time."

"Our earliest memory," Tim added, "is sitting on our grandfather's lap when we were three years old as he read us the Sunday comics."

"That was a time for great comics strips, too," Greg said. "Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*, Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon*, and those great Disney adventure strips. But our favorite was Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*."

"Those strips were what inspired us to draw," Tim revealed.

The brothers discovered comic books in the late 1940s. Among their favorites were Disney books by Jesse Marsh and *Tarzan*. But most of all, they looked forward to each issue of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's *Captain America*.

The fantastic visions they found in those pages combined with others from books and films to fuel the fertile imagination of each of the brothers. This imaginative fervor led them to create some of the most recognizable images in recent memory: they painted the original poster for the movie *Star Wars*, best-selling *Lord of*

The story, which takes place in **X-MEN 2099 #21-25**, will also delve into Luna's connection with the Theatre of Pain. It is also revealed that Bloodhawk has a heretofore unknown link to the Theatre.

"The back story of Bloodhawk's connection to the Theatre of Pain is kind of interesting," Lim said. "In an early issue, John mentioned in the plot that Bloodhawk was being tortured by a group of scientists. In trying to make the scientists less boring, I drew them all wearing masks very similar to those worn by the Controllers from the Theatre of Pain."

"This was before we had introduced the Theatre into the continuity but we knew it was coming and it made so much sense, we ran with it," Moore added.

A MAN NAMED SOMERS

While the X-Men grapple with the Theatre of Pain, Doom's plan to control America's mutants will continue.

When Doom learns of The Red Market, he decides that he can be making the profit himself. He creates the position of "Minister of Humanity," ostensively to protect humans from outside threats like degens [humans who have been scientifically altered through corporate experimentation], and especially mutants.

The man Doom appoints to the job is named Morphine Somers. Moore wouldn't reveal whether Somers is related to other mutants with similar last names. "Morphine's job is to classify all of America's mutants for Doom, who feels that mutants are a lower class than humans. Morphine takes to the job quite well," Moore explained.

"Morphine has his own agenda. There is a deep-seeded hatred for mutants inside of him, and he has plans of his own that Doom is unaware of," he added.

The X-Men are taken in by Somers, as well. They assist him in the creation of a new refugee state that, at first, seems like a good idea, but then takes on a terrible twist.

"Morphine sets himself up as the mutants' friend, but when he is really needed, he turns his back on them, leaving Xi'an in the lurch," Moore said.

TWENTY-FIFTH SPECTACULAR

"A lot is going to happen in issue #25. We're going to see the final battle between Xi'an and Brimstone Love. Tim and the X-Men will take on the Theatre of Pain. And, for the first time since issue #7, the whole team has been together," Moore said.

"I'm really looking forward to the issue," Lim said. "Everything hits the fan in an all-out battle. I really get to let loose. Plus, I get to draw the whole team together again."

In addition to the resolution of the Theatre of Pain storyline, issue #25 will see the formation of Morphine Somers' mutant refugee state. "As part of his classification job, Morphine will begin to round-up mutants and place them in a small corner of the southwest 'for their own protection.' The city/state will become the new focus for the X-Men after #25," Moore said.

A NEW BEGINNING

The new era in X-MEN 2099 history of begins with issue #26. "In that issue, the X-Men discover the treachery of Morphine Somers. They are forced to become the protectors of the new city/state. I feel that this gives the X-Men a new purpose," Moore remarked.

It also sets the book in a new direction with the team splitting into *two* units; those who must run the day-to-day operations of the city, and those who continue to pursue other mutants to join their community.

"I'm still working out who will be in each unit. In fact, I'm pretty sure that the team will rotate, with certain characters going out on some missions and staying home on others."

Xi'an will resume his position as team leader after issue #25. Other members of the team will be in for changes. Metalhead, who has been traveling the country with Mama Hurricane and the group of Degens known as the Freakshow, will return to the team as they establish the city/state. "Metalhead has gotten very close with a member of the Freakshow named Rosa, who is pregnant by the madman known as Glitterspike. They arrive at the city/state just in time for the baby to be born, but it's almost immediately kidnapped by Glitterspike," Moore said.

"Shakti has already determined that the baby is a mutant, but we don't know what its powers will be. I haven't determined what the power will be, but the baby may be the most powerful mutant in the 2099 universe," he added. The kidnapping sets part of the team on a quest to track down Rosa's child.

Tim and Luna will go through tough times, as well. As they continue to spend time together, they will discover things about each other that

Tim [illegible] Terry Brooks' famous fantasy [illegible] The Sword of Shannara, [illegible] they [illegible] ing. [illegible] "I just finished reacquiring all of the comics [illegible] Greg said.

As their [illegible] the comics [illegible] try, the Hildebrandts [illegible] hero [illegible] cards [illegible] both [illegible] and DC, including a Marvel [illegible] poster depicting the X-Men 2099 team. [illegible] on [illegible] w [illegible] on *OASIS*, they discovered [illegible] and [illegible] a comic book and [illegible] to develop a different creative [illegible]

"We've [illegible] other [illegible] that, in many ways, creating art for comics [illegible] much more *complex*," Tim said. "Comics are a more [illegible] [illegible] design."

"The real challenge is telling a story," Greg [illegible] "Being able to [illegible] [illegible] together to impart a message is extremely different than anything [illegible] done before."

CHOOSING THE CHARACTERS

When the brothers began talking to Marvel about developing a comic, they discussed the possibility of working on many characters. "Several of [illegible] projects were [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and we [illegible] books to one set of characters — the X-Men. When the 2099 [illegible] were unveiled, we [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] when Marvel brought out X-MEN 2099, we knew what [illegible] wanted to work on."

Photograph by Chris Ebel

[illegible] gave us an opportunity to [illegible] an X-Men [illegible] make a contribution [illegible] of the characters," Tim [illegible]

will push them apart. In addition, Tim will be very uncomfortable having to relinquish leadership to X'ian.

"Tim is in for a very rough time in upcoming months. He will, however, find a new friend in Bloodhawk, who gains new respect for him as they battle the Theatre of Pain together," Moore said.

THE DISTANT FUTURE

Moore's plans for issues past #28 are still in the preliminary stages. However, he does have some plans he is willing to share:

Shakti, whose power is to detect other mutants, will take the spotlight in OASIS, an X-MEN 2099 one-shot written by Moore and fully painted by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt.

A new X-Man will join the team in issue #27 or #28, "The new character being a cyberpunk character from the streets, but I haven't figured out his name or powers yet," Moore said.

The Driver — the man that Xi'an believed to be one of the saviors of mutantkind — will return at some point.

One of the members of The Lawless and the legendary cyber-net team Avalon 5 — Broken Haiku — will return in a future issue.

Finally, Junkpile — the mutant who betrayed the X-Men in issue #2 — will return as a west-coast agent for Doom's S.H.I.E.L.D.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

"X-MEN 2099 is great to work on. The team John and I work with, which includes inker Harry Candelario, letterer Ken Lopez and colorist Tom Smith, is one of the best I've ever been involved with. John's scripts are just great, and I think the book is some of the best art I've produced," Lim said.

Moore concurred. "I love working with this team. I'm very excited by the upcoming events in X-MEN 2099. The new challenges of the city/state, the treachery of Morphine Somers, and all rest will take us to the next level. It's an exciting time for *everyone* who has tried the series to jump on," Moore promised.

the regular X-Men, there's more than 30 years of continuity to worry about. There's only two years of 2099 history, so what we do can have a permanent effect on the characters."

The brothers met with writer Moore several times to hammer out the plot for the book. "It was a lot of fun," Moore said. "I had a basic plot idea that I

presented and they had some ideas for some business that would work in the story."

We were thrilled when we got John's plot and saw that he had used our ideas to help set the tone of the book," Tim said.

TERRY RETURNS

The Hildebrandts are currently only working on *OASIS* for Marvel, but they are working on another comic-related project. With writer Michael Uslan, they are reviving their favorite strip from their childhood, Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* from Tribune News Media.

"The strip will be a seven day a week thing," Greg said. "We'll produce the daily strips in pen and ink and the Sunday strips will be fully-painted. *New York Newsday* has already guaranteed us a half-page on the front of their Sunday comics section. We can hardly wait."

FUTURE COMICS

And what about other comic book work?

"After we've finished *OASIS*, we'd definitely like to do a four-issue limited series, especially one starring Captain America. Then we'd like to take on a monthly book for a year," Greg said.

"Eventually we want to come up with a project of our own that we would write and draw," Tim noted.

So for their future, the Brothers Hildebrandts are planning well beyond 2099.

Writer Randy Meredith is a designer for the Columbus Museum of Art. Randy wishes Steve Saffel the best of luck at Del Rey Books.

Heard it through The Grapevine

For the past year or so, there has been a persistent rumor regarding preparations by Toy Biz to launch a line of toys based on Marvel's 2099 universe. The rumors were half right.

Toy Biz is introducing figures based on 2099 characters, but *not* on the whole universe. The X-Men 2099, a cornerstone of that universe, will be featured in two assortments of *X-Men* figures shipping in 1995. They will temporarily replace the *X-Force* assortments that have traditionally been the counterpoint to the X-Men releases.

"One of the things we want to do," Toy Biz Creative Director Ron McArdle revealed, "is continue the heat of the different X-Men families, because there are *so many* other great characters, including the X-Men 2099 universe. Just like X-Force is a family, we consider X-Men 2099 a family, so we have a couple of assortments planned for *X-Men 2099* figures that everyone knows from the comics. We've gotten the art from the creative team on the book, a lot of input from Marvel; we've really thought it out."

"The kind of world 2099 is," added Jesse Falcon, junior product manager for Toy Biz, "it's basically *Road Warrior* meets *Blade Runner*. You have these gigantic, super-techno cities, and then between these cities are these arid desert wastelands. So far, we have seen the characters function in both environments. They [Marvel] have done a great job creating that whole universe, and this is one of the real big

gems of that universe. Ron Lim's design work with the book has been tremendously energetic, he's a great designer."

"They're really great characters and they deserve to be communicated more than just two-dimensionally," McArdle continued. "And we thought they would make a nice assortment. Like we said before, there are always new *X-Men* characters coming out but with X-Force you have limitations. So what we've decided is there is X-Men and then there will be a sub-X thing, whether it's X-Force under one assortment or it's X-Men 2099 or something else entirely."

The first assortment of figures premiered at the February Toy Fair trade show in New York City. Many of the specifics, such as when the assortments will ship and even things like the distribution of the figures within the case, will be determined based on the reaction of the toy trade at Toy Fair. "We have been very lucky in this toy company, in that almost everything that we have shown at a Toy Fair has been manufactured," McArdle explained. "That's only because we are so small that the only things we have time to work on are things that will live. There are larger toy companies that can carry a thing to Toy Fair and go all the way to producing a couple of samples and it never gets shipped or sold because the trade's not interested. We don't do that–it's not cost effective and we don't want to spin our wheels. We're not nervous about bringing a new line of Marvel figures because we know our collector base will want to buy it. Because there is a lot of competition out there; the more multimedia support you have behind something the better the chances of the line's success. But if you think about the niche that this is replacing–which is *X-Force*–there was really no show around *X-Force*, with the exception of having Cable in it and maybe one figure, like Mojo.

"We wanted to reinvigorate the *X-Men* universe a bit. New fresh blood is always good. Plus, it would give *X-Force* a bit of a break. By the time we are done with these two assortments, there will probably be a whole new bunch of *X-Force* figures to do. *X-Men* always tried to straddle both worlds to make everyone happy. The TV show took off and a lot of people were demanding that we do figures based on the show, because that's where most people knew the characters from. We utilize *X-Force* as the brand that allowed us to do great characters that maybe didn't get a chance to be on the show yet but are still in the X-Men universe. Like Mojo is a perfect character; when we planned him there were no plans to have him on the show."

"Killspree is another one," Falcon added. "He has only been in two or three issues at the most, and he is probably one of the neatest toys we have out this year. Both his mechanism, and in the look of the toy–he's got a truly bizarre look."

To begin developing the unique look needed for *X-Men 2099*, McArdle, Falcon, Product Development Vice-President JoAnn McLaughlin, Bob Leff, and of course, Toy Biz head Avi Arad sat down with material provided by Joey Cavalieri and Matt Morra (from Marvel) and pored over the characters available, to come up with the two most dynamic assortments. Finding the proper balance between the two assortments was almost as difficult as choosing the characters themselves.

"We didn't want to put all our best stuff in the first assortment and have the second one be a sub-par one, but at the same time we wanted the first one to be *very* strong," McArdle illustrated. "So we split it in what we consider to be a pretty good balance of good and bad characters in both assortments, and this is what we have come down to, with the first assortment being Bloodhawk, Controller 13, Brimstone Love, Metal Head–it's the mutated Metal Head, Skullfire, Meanstreak, and La Lunatica. The second assortment should be Xi'an, Junkpile, The Driver, Halloween Jack, Glitterspike, Shadowdancer, and Breakdown.

"The one difficulty that we had with this book is that there are only 16 issues out and every issue these characters changed slightly–like Metal Head. When we first started out, he looked *nothing* like he does now; he looked like Warpath. Then he changed and mutated and his powers changed and now they have changed once again so he's no longer two colors. But he looked so cool like that."

"There are some people here who, all they want is a good toy. That's their background–they just know good toys. With the *X-Men 2099*, right away you see the 'ooh-factor,' as in 'Ooh, that will make a really good toy.' They don't care if he's been around one year or thirty," McArdle elaborated.

The next step involved McArdle, Falcon, McLaughlin, and some others, sitting down to brainstorm on how the characters' powers would translate. They also looked at costing packages to evaluate the price involved in giving the characters a different kind of look. To reflect the grittier feel of the book and keeping in step with the foil cover on each 2099 first issue, they plan on using a variety of metal sprays.

To reflect the grittier feel of the book and keeping in step with the foil cover on each 2099 first issue, they plan on using a variety of metal sprays.

This is also the stage where different mechanism concepts were discussed and special production considerations weighed. Any kind of bizarre production or manufacturing problems had to be resolved at this stage. For example, Brimstone Love has a giant horn that will be manufactured separately and then be added instead of molded in one piece.

"Unusually, for this assortment we didn't use one or two sculptors, it was more like four or five," McArdle said. "We're trying to build a pool of sculptors so that we can get a nice base. We want to make sure we have the resources for new projects. We're always looking for talented people–sculptors and so forth. We'll be at the San Diego Comic Con looking at people's work this year. We're looking for a more diverse talent pool."

McArdle and Falcon discussed the figures in the first assortment and tried when possible to elaborate on the mechanism and accessories. They stressed that it was still early in the process (at press time) and many things were still subject to change.

"On Skullfire we're going to have a feature where you remove his gauntlets and there will be some sort of see-through material that will allow you to see his skeleton. Skullfire is going to be really challenging to make an action figure. Bloodhawk's feature is going to be in his wings and he'll have a separate bandolero that he wears. Meanstreak will have a pedestal that you put him on that moves when you pull it back and looks like a dust cloud. He'll also come with a gun. Metalhead will have a punch like The Thing. Brimstone Love will actually have a pivot-at-the-waist haymaker, as well as a communicator and a separate cape.

"La Lunatica, she's a psychic vampire, so how do you do that with a toy? But she's also an acrobat and warrior, so we've given her some blade-like weapons she holds onto and a projectile weapon. Controller 13 has no mechanism but he will be tremendously accessorized. This character basically gets off torturing other characters."

"Not that we recommend it," Falcon added.

"No, not at all," McArdle agreed. "So we set him up with a bunch of gauntlets to restrain other characters, and a VR torture mask. He's got a bunch of accessory probes, as well as the seeing eye that attaches to the top of his spine and a real cloth cape. He is going to be accessory-intensive."

When it came to the second assortment they were unable to discuss any of the mechanisms or accessories.

"The second assortment is pretty tentative," McArdle explained.

"We want it to be the best it can be, so we are always on the lookout, and up until the last minute we're trying to improve it as much as we can.

"We had characters in mind when we were trying to fill out these assortments; then issues would come out and we'd say, 'Yeah, Halloween Jack, we'd love to do that.' In between that time and the second assortment, if they introduce a new character that we think might replace or make a better character than a second tier character...

"We want it to be the best it can be, so we are always on the lookout, and up until the last minute we're trying to improve it as much as we can. The problem being when we go to Marvel and ask them what's coming up, way down the line for them is three months away, whereas to make a toy you need a full year from design to getting it on the shelf. That's the proper time you need. So if I ask them 'will a character be around for another year?' they can't answer that for us."

Decisions regarding the ratio of figures within a shipping case have yet to be made. These decisions will play a large role in the collectibility of certain figures. With assortments for *X-Men* and *X-Force* clear-cut favorites, Wolverine and Cable make such decisions no-brainers. No one character has stepped up and emerged as their top counterpart in the *X-Men 2099* assortments. "We base that decision on the popularity of the market that it is established in," McArdle explained, "which is the comic market. We know Skullfire is very popular and other characters are very popular and we'll weigh it based on that. It's really cut-and-dried.

"People are astounded that *X-Men* is doing so well in the mass market. I'm not surprised at all; all it took was establishing the magic that was done in the comic book that made it the number one comic book for years, and just doing it somewhere else. If you did it and gave it the attention it demands–and is due–there is no reason it can't be a best-seller, which is exactly what happened."

"Bloodhawk is probably going to sell the best, because it looks *really* dynamic," Falcon interjected. "Although Skullfire could do really well. We'll wait until the last minute to determine the exact assortment, until more issues of the book are out, and get Marvel's feedback about which characters are most popular."

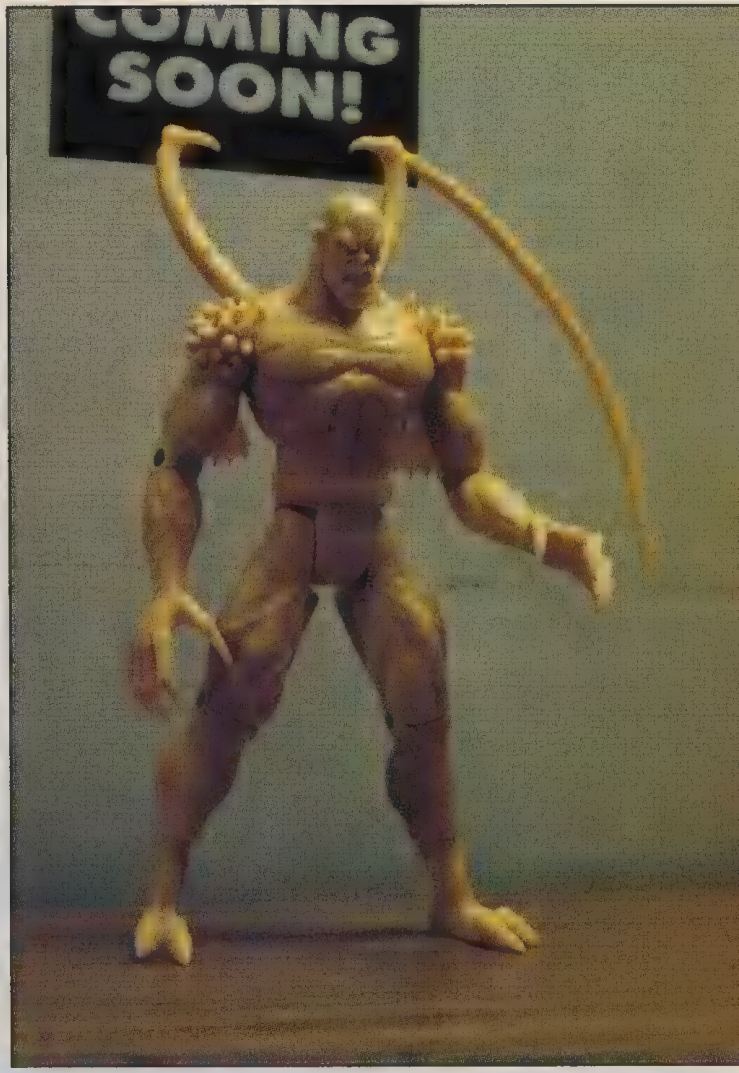
X-Men 2099 Editor Joey Cavalieri agreed that no one character has stepped up and stolen the fans' hearts. Based on letters he receives, Cavalieri feels that the favorite character changes from month to month. "The most popular character seems to be whoever is featured in the book that month. If it's Skullfire that month, then everyone goes nuts for Skullfire; if Metal Head is having problems, the enormous amount of sympathy he generates makes him the most popular character that month. If

Photograph by Anna Harper

they see Xi'an is joining the Theater of Pain, this drives them nuts and suddenly he is the most popular character." Cavalieri has the opportunity to look at all the figures as they come in from the sculptors and expresses nothing but enthusiasm for the project. "Oh boy, oh boy do I want a set of these so *bad*. They're just gorgeous! First they brought in Bloodhawk, which was stunningly accurate–just beautiful. It looked exactly like ■ Ron Lim drawing; it was remarkable. The Bloodhawk looks so much like a Ron Lim drawing that we just howled when we saw it. We just recognized it immediately.

"I can't tell you how–when Ron McArdle called and said they were going to make a Halloween Jack and a Driver–oh man! I have a tremendous amount of affection for those characters–just as much as ones that I grew up with. So I was really, really happy when Ron told me they were going to sculpt these characters. They're just well-realized, well-designed, unique characters. I have a slight personal involvement, being the editor. I try to mid wife them and shave some rough edges off. That's the extent of my involvement.

"I had some input into the original core group; that was definitely a group effort, and ■ sound one at that, but I don't think my affection for them stems from my involvement. I think they're just cool guys. To see Halloween Jack bouncing across the page or the Driver just standing there... what can I say? We're legit! It just really feels legit!"



Photograph by Steve Saffel

Brian David-Marshall, *when not busy rearranging his toy collection to make room for ■ Corsair figure, can often be found patiently explaining that David is not his middle name.*

Cyberspace

It's not unlikely that a reader of this magazine stopped to get some cash before visiting his favorite comics dealer. Where did he stop? At an Automatic Teller Machine, of course.

After making his purchases, he may have decided to check his list of "Things To Do," to see what other errands demanded his attention... and found the list right where he left it, on his trusty, pocket-sized Personal Digital Organizer.

Returning home, our hypothetical reader decided to check his messages. There, sitting on the coffee table next to the wireless remote controls that operate his television and VCR and CD player and laserdisc machine, was his faithful fax/answering machine, brimming with digitally-recorded greetings and electronically-printed messages.

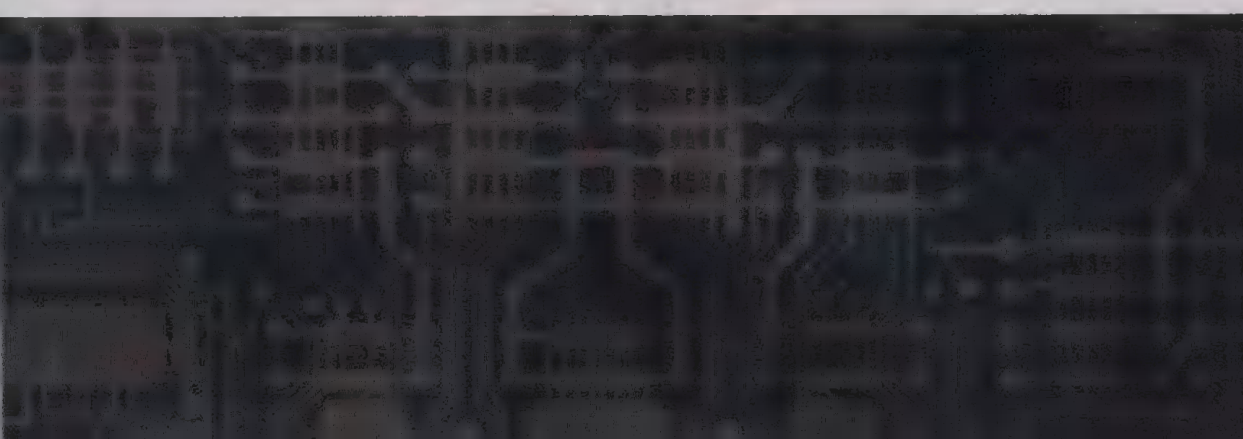
The day's chores attended to, our reader placed his dinner in the microwave oven, and—in the five minutes it takes to heat a meal—switched on his personal desktop computer and logged on to a world-wide computer bulletin board to check his mail, play some games, perhaps chat with a few dozen fellow computer enthusiasts online.

Then this reader opened up the bag of comics he'd bought earlier in the day and pulled out one or all of his favorite 2099 titles. He sat back to enjoy the fabulous adventures of a futuristic world where all money exists in a virtual electronic network; where all the world's information can be had at the touch of a fingertip on a portable keypad; where data and entertainment flies at lightspeed into millions of homes through the aid of wondrous devices available to every consumer; where domestic chores are performed by electronic, solid-state servants; and where cyberjocks meet and greet inside a vast virtual network of Cyberspace reality...

Whoever said "art imitates life" didn't look forward to the 1990's, when art—or science fiction, anyhow—has its hands full just trying to stay ahead of the real world. The challenge—to create an exciting fictional landscape of the next millennium, without being overshadowed by technological miracles of our daily lives today—is one that faces Marvel's 2099 creative team *every single month.*

How *does* one predict the future when it already seems to be exploding all around?

Part of the answer, GHOST RIDER 2099 writer Len Kaminski says, is *not* to try to predict the future at all. As he points out, even the greatest science fiction literature, entertaining as it is, scores pretty badly on prognostication. "Fifty years ago," he said, "science fiction authors wrote about bases on the moon and robot servants. Virtually nobody foresaw VCRs, fax machines, and personal computers–even though all of those things could have been



Is Here (Or, The Future?

extrapolated from scientific knowledge at the time."

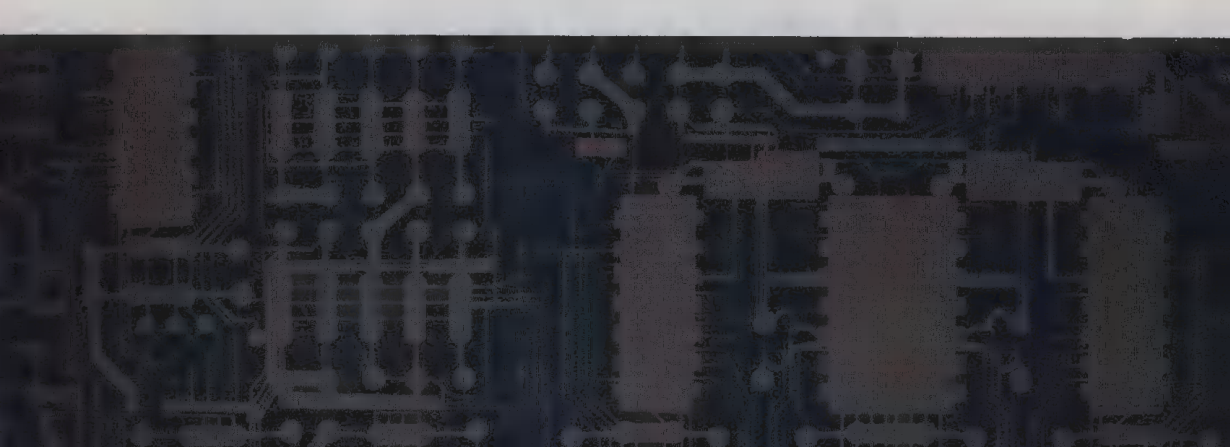
As Kaminski sees it, his job is less to *predict* the future than to tell *entertaining* stories set in an engrossing fictional world. "You can't actually create a future that'll bear much resemblance to the real thing," he explained. "All you can do is make a series of plausible, informed guesses based on the present day."

Those guesses are part of what makes the 2099 universe a richly detailed landscape; and it's easy to see that many of its astounding innovations are taken from present-day reality. 2099's Cyberspace is a computer-generated network, linked by millions of individual users, where man, machine, and data all merge into a great electronic highway; not very different from today's *Internet*, where people from all over the world interact and exchange views, interests, and information.

"All you can do is make a series of plausible, informed guesses based on the present day."

The Total Reality addicts introduced in PUNISHER 2099 are players in a virtual "dreamscape" who become totally lost in their computer-generated, artificial world. Anyone who's spent too many hours engrossed in a home video game will find the TR addicts *awfully* familiar. With the current advances in graphics and personal-electronics technology, today's answering machine is just a few steps away from Lyta, the holographic assistant who acts as Miguel (Spider-Man 2099) O'Hara's helpmate. The *Maglev* (Magnetic Levitation) transit system used by 2099 citizens is an extrapolation of technology on present-day drawing boards and even the Organ Leggers of 2099—criminals who trade in the sale of human body parts—have their roots in our ever-improving medical transplant technology.

That doesn't mean that 2099's creators don't have a few fascinating wrinkles up their sleeves. Though today's computer hackers have wrought their share of mischief, it *hasn't* reached the level of 2099's "Domino Crash"—a massive cyberspace disaster, masterminded by outlaw hackers, that brought the entire world computer



network to a grinding halt. And Len Kaminski hints at a tidbit he may unveil in a future issue of GHOST RIDER 2099: Thrillsville, a virtual amusement park combining the best elements of *Walt Disney World* and *Star Trek's* Holodeck, providing 2099 tourists with the ultimate in manufactured entertainment.

The freedom to run wild, creatively, in 2099's world is one thing that appeals most to writers like Kaminski. "You've got a relatively clean slate, compared to the present-day Marvel Universe," he observed. "There's a whole lot less established about the status quo of the world at large, with plenty of blank spaces to play with." This freedom, he cautions, is not without its pitfalls. "You have to keep track of what's going on in the other 2099 titles *very closely* so you don't end up accidentally contradicting or duplicating what somebody else is doing." One example is a concept of Kaminski's known as "Medi-Kwik," a combination medical clinic and fast-food franchise. "I thought I was being really bloody clever," he said ruefully. "And then I found out Peter David had already done that in SPIDER-MAN 2099 (under the name "Doc-In-The-Box"), and I'd somehow overlooked it."

Still, the world of 2099 is a big place, with a lot of unexplored territory yet to be covered. One question that has yet to be answered involves the fabulous technology of the present-day Marvel Universe, much of it far beyond the reach of its 21st-Century counterpart. It includes the earthshaking inventions of resident geniuses Reed Richards and Tony Stark. "About all we know at the present time is that a lot of that stuff was somehow lost by 2099," Kaminski observed, "but extremely powerful technologies don't just *disappear*." Kaminski speculates that some of that so-called "lost" wizardry may not be lost at all, but is being surppressed by 2099's powerful transnational corporations, among them D/MONIX and Alchemax. "You know, like the rumors that Exxon has a whole vault of secret patents for cars that get 200 miles to the gallon," he elaborated.

That, of course, is a matter for the future—and 2099's future promises, as it has so far, to be an endlessly fascinating canvas of new ideas, brilliant innovation, and miracles 20th-Century humans can't begin to visualize. On the other hand, the 20th Century shows no signs of stopping its own incredible explosion of technology and invention, ensuring that the architects of 2099 must constantly strive to top the world outside the windows.

"And hope," as Len Kaminski added, "that nothing happens next week that makes you look like an idiot before your story's even published."

Scott Benson *is an acknowledged expert on futuristic technology, and will be happy to set the clock on your VCR for a modest fee.*

THE CODE OF CITIZEN CONDUCT OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 2099

MY CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Dear Citizen:

As you no doubt now know, the peaceful transfer of power has once again taken place in this proud nation, to which the rest of the world looks for a model of freedom and liberty. The United States of America continues to remain true as a model experiment in democracy.

With that nature, various hypotheses may be tried. Our Nation has most recently experimented with a capitalistic oligopoly, which resulted in the wanton exploitation of resources; in the curtailment of basic public rights, such as protection from crime *regardless* of ability to pay; in the stifling of freedom of expression; and in rampant injustice based upon economic class.

All this ends today. Our Nation has a new experiment: autocratic democracy. As your new President, I have already embarked upon a historic legislative crusade: The First One Hundred Minutes. In this time, I have passed sweeping laws that will improve the economy and the environment; guarantee public access to information, housing, education, and medical care; lift the arts from censorship; end discrimination based on biological status; ensure crucial personal liberties; and firmly establish the Presidency — the Executive Branch — as the paternal power we have always wished it to be.

It is morning in America. Our enemies fear us. Our allies, sensibly, also fear us — for it is fear that commands respect. As the world's preeminent superpower, we pledge never to diverge from this position.

As always, the critical component in this nation's destiny is you, the Citizen. The character and quality of our people are second to none on Earth. Because of your enduring faith, our resources and our capacity to lead remain unparalleled. And each Citizen, as caretaker of the American spirit, carries a responsibility to our Nation's present prosperity *and* to its future growth.

This responsibility, a cherished product of American strength, comes not from vagueness, but from clarity; not from confusion, but from certainty; not from questions, but from answers.

The answers are here, in this **Code of Citizen Conduct of the United States of America**, a summary of major laws and regulations now in effect. It applies to all Citizens, residents, and visitors within the U.S. and its territories and subsidiaries, including the American lunar colonies, the Martian colony *Mars One*, and the undersea pilot project *Atlantis*. You must read it, understand it, and abide by it.

We have presented this overview in as clear and simple a fashion as possible. No adult Citizen shall attempt to contend any misunderstanding on his or her part. For your benefit, we have painstakingly analyzed American literacy and intelligence levels; therefore, **it is impossible to misinterpret any edict, law or regulation of this Code.**

Thanks, at last, to this newfound clarity and direction, our country can move confidently forward. Families will be strengthened. Free expression will appear to flower. And Citizens need no longer feel want or fear, so long as they support this great nation. **Who among us would have reason to not do so?**

Because you truly understand and support your government's goals, you the Citizens of this republic, can ensure that our Nation will stand for years to come, growing to extend its influence not only throughout the Earth, but throughout the stars.

And woe be to any who would halt the triumph of our will.

DR. VICTOR VON DOOM
PRESIDENT, U. S. A.

TABLE OF CONTENTS: CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

I. THE CODE: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU
II. Compliance with the Code
III. Reporting and Investigation Code Violations
- A. Policing and Military Agencies
  - 1. Agencies Outlawed
  - 2. Agencies to be Obeyed
- B. Executive Agencies
- C. The Judiciary

IV. Policies of the Code
- A. Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship
  - 1. Mutants and Other Alternative Individuals
  - 2. Right to Bodily Self-Determination
  - 3. Currency, Credit, and Financial, Stock and Commodities Markets
  - 4. Education
  - 5. Housing
  - 6. Medical Care
  - 7. Political Activities
  - 8. Family
  - 9. Religion
  - 10. Cultural Activities
  - 11. Controlled Substances
  - 12. Personal Weapons

V. Superhumans and Other Adventurers
- A. Approved Super Heroes and Adventurers:
  - 1. Spider-Man
  - 2. Ghost Rider
  - 3. X-Men and Affiliate Western Mutants
- B. Others:
  - 1. Junkpile
  - 2. Galahad
- C. Rogue Adventurers:
  - 1. The Hulk
  - 2. Duke Stratosphere
  - 3. The Net Prophet
  - 4. Metalscream
  - 5. The Sisterhood of Tears/Lachryma
  - 6. Hap Hazzard

VI. Corporations and Megacorporation
- A. Summary of Key Laws and Related Policies
  - 1. Labor and Employment Law
  - 2. Summary of Key Labor Laws and Related Policies

VII. Independent Municipalities (Indygovs)

VIII. Information Access and the Media
- A. Conventional Media
- B. The Net (Cyberspace and Other Alternate Realities)
- C. Protection of Proprietary and Classified Information

IX. Environmental Compliance

X. International Relations
- A. Favored Nations
- B. Suspect Nations
- C. Restricted Favored Nation

XI. Extraterrestrials

XII. Magic

AFTERWORD

THE CODE: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

The Code of Citizen Conduct of the United States of America serves you, the Citizen, by providing clear, unambiguous directives regarding the new national order. Here is everything a Citizen needs to know regarding public and private conduct, over and above the local regulations and laws of your city, state, or Indygov. Our Nation has a proud history of compliance with the law and it is our intent that we not only continue this tradition, but expand upon it.

Each Citizen is required to read, memorize, and know each tenet of the Code. While penalties for *not* doing so will be swift, severe, and inevitable, your government is fully confident that such incidents will be rare.

The proud Citizens of the United States of America are to be considered now put on notice to such consequences, and under the regulations of the newly implemented "Personal Responsibility Act," will accept full and unequivocal accountability for same.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

The Minister of Order has been designated the National Compliance Officer. This Ministry will have ultimate responsibility for overseeing compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, the Code of Conduct, and all related national policies and procedures. All are available for download and review via the Net. **It is within every Citizen's access, and it is every Citizen's responsibility to comply with all aspects of the Code.** All elements of the Code are subject to Executive Branch review without notice.

REPORTING CODE VIOLATIONS

If you know of or suspect a violation of the Code, you must immediately report that information to the National Compliance Officer. Reporting of violations may be made from any private or public comlink, via e-mail, or via private-access or CYNEX public-access cyberspace messaging.

It is not required you give your name when reporting violations, as comlink and cyberlink technology will automatically identify you. Your identity will be maintained in confidence to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

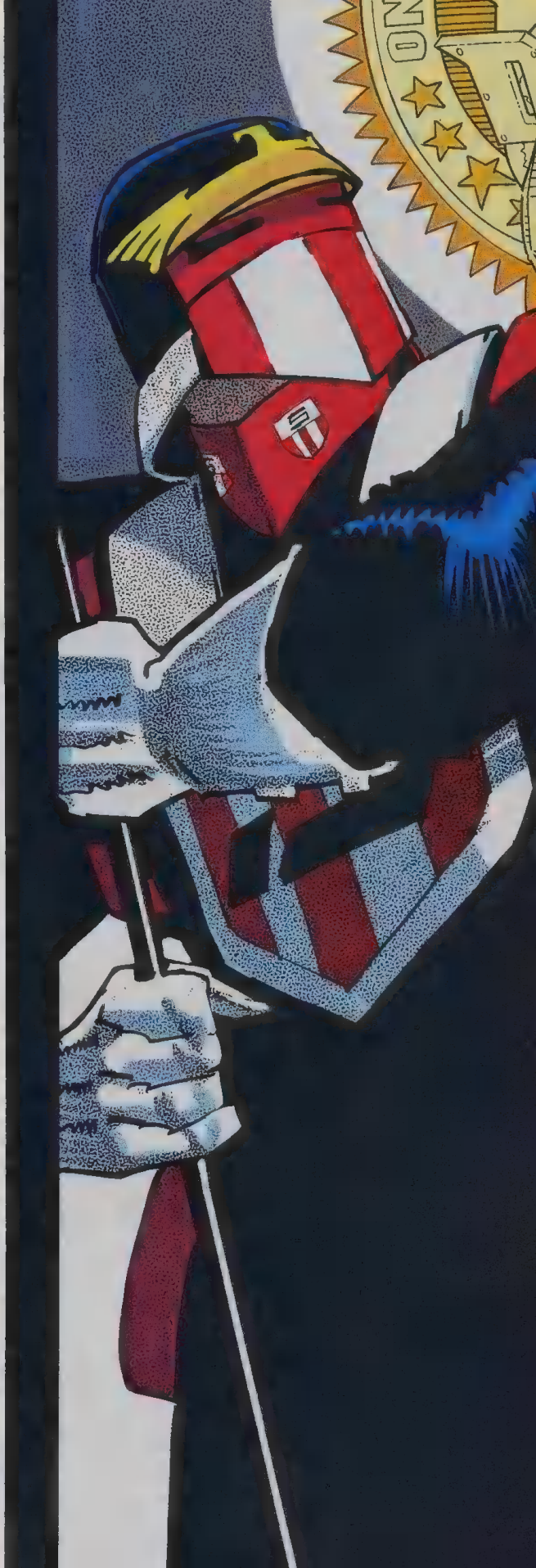
to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

If you are involved in the violation, the fact of your reportage, together with the degree of your cooperation, will be given consideration in the investigation and any resulting disciplinary action. No person reporting a violation shall suffer public embarrassment or be subject to retaliation. Any Citizen responsible for reprisals against such individuals will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including summary execution. The submission knowingly false reports will constitute a violation of the Code and will also result in disciplinary action.

All reported violations of the Code will be promptly investigated by the office of the National Compliance Officer, with SHIELD officials and other appropriate officials. Citizens are required to cooperate.

Policing and Military Agencies

All Citizens are entitled to equal security and protection under the law, without regard to ability to pay. All



former Unsupervised Zones are entitled to police protection and to the rule of law.

All policing and militia functions hereby fall under the purview of the Minister of Punishment.

Agencies Outlawed

All Corporate, private, and public-private police, military, and paramilitary forces, including but not limited to the Public Eye (New York City), Central Security (Transverse City), Angel's Breath (Washington, D.C.), and Sweet Dreams (SoCal) are hereby disbanded, as is the freelance-operative Guild of Independent Elite. No federal military shall be established, other than the Presidential guard, the Panther's Rage.

Agencies to be Obeyed

The *Wrongdoer Punishment Act* transfers all police functions to the newly formed Ministry of Punishment force, **SHIELD**. Under this agency is established an investigative/tribunal/correctional unit — the Punishment Police—the powers and functions of which are detailed under Code section entitled "The Judiciary."

Separate and distinct from **SHIELD** shall be the Presidential guard, the Panther's Rage, answerable solely to the Executive Branch and to President Doom. The Executive Branch may additionally appoint Federal Marshals anywhere at his discretion.

All military, national defense, and first-strike capabilities shall be the sole province of the Executive Branch.

Recognizing Amendment II of the Constitution of the United States of America ("A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed"), the *Murder Prevention Act* herewith establishes a well-regulated Militia to provide a first line of defense in the event of extraordinary attack by the enemy. This well-regulated Militia shall remain inactive until such time as called upon to duty by **SHIELD**. Size and armament of such local units shall be *strictly* regulated.

Executive Agencies

The Executive Ministries exist to maintain order and liberty in our Republic. Their directives have been arrived upon after painstaking research and calculation. Citizens, for the good of the Nation and of themselves, will obey them directly regarding all matters. Details appear further within the Code. This summary overview serves to assure Citizens and the government that the duties of each are clear, and no questions need be necessary or tolerated.

▪ **The Minister of Order** is responsible for overseeing compliance with all laws, regulations, codes, and policies; supervising maintenance of the environment; maintaining data on superhuman sightings; approving corporate activities; settling labor disputes; and appointing Indygov mayors.

• **The Minister of Punishment** is responsible for appointing and administering judges; administering the Punishment Police; overseeing local Militia; and maintaining data on organized crime.

• **The Minister of Enemy Relations** has primary responsibility for all matters involving the United States and foreign governments or other foreign entities, and is responsible for matters pertaining to citizenship; other Ministries have secondary responsibility for matters falling into their purview.

▪ **The Minister of Humanity** has primary responsibility for all mutant affairs; other Ministries have secondary responsibility for mutant-citizen matters falling into their purview.

▪ **The Minister of Well-Being** operates the housing, medical, transportation, and educational agencies; and oversees and approves any medical experimentation.

• **The Minister of Signal** has primary responsibility for all non-criminal matters pertaining to the Net and the media; other Ministries have secondary responsibility for Net and media matters falling into their purview.

• **The Judiciary**

All Citizens are entitled to equal recognition before, and access to, the judicial process. To this end, the slow, anachronistic, hierarchical structure of local, state, Federal, and appellate courts, and The Supreme Court, are disbanded. Their functions are hereby absorbed by the Executive Court (civil and criminal divisions).

Recognizing the time-consuming burden of jury duty and resulting lost productivity on the part of the Citizen, juries are hereby eliminated in favor of special-master judges (civil and criminal divisions). Court appeals are limited to one, in cases of reasonably suspected judiciary misconduct or technical error.

Judges are responsible for sentencing, at their discretion.

The Punishment Police will have the power of summary judgment and sentencing up to and including capital punishment of perpetrators caught in the commission of a crime. However, any officer of the Punishment Police, and his/her superior(s), found to have delivered summary sentencing to a *non-guilty* party will be subject to identical punishment.

Citizens are entitled to presumption of innocence. Plaintiffs must bear the burden of proof. Citizens have the right to be free of harassment or brutality, physical or verbal, from members of the police. However, members of the police may defend themselves to extreme prejudicial degree.

Citizen and police disputes will be judged by a joint tribunal of the Ministers of Punishment and Order.

Judicial sentencing and punishment may take the form of imprisonment and/or fines for civil offenses, or neurological micro-surgery and/or geri-toxin injection for criminal offenses. Summary punishment by the Punisher Police may take whatever form is available and expedient, at their discretion.

No convicted defendant may lower his sentence by any means, including cash, goods, services, time off for good behavior, or other reasons or parole.

POLICIES OF THE CODE

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

All Citizens, regardless of gender, race, color, creed, religion, age, marital status, biological status, sexual orientation, physical disability, or national origin, are entitled to certain unalienable rights at the Executive Branch's discretion.

Citizenship is conferred upon persons born in the United States or its territories (but not its colonies), or those born of Citizen parents in foreign countries. Dual citizenship is automatically conferred upon all Latverian citizens and all Americans of documented Latverian descent.

Naturalized citizenship is available to immigrants or United States-subsidiary colonists, subject to the policies and regulations of the Immigration and Naturalization Office of the Minister of Enemy Relations.

Moon-born or Martian-born colonists hold colonial citizenship and may neither emigrate nor apply for United States citizenship, except under the *Extraordinary Alien* provision. A decision on the under-

development Atlantis subsidiary is pending.

Citizens may travel freely within American borders, including the island states of Hawaii and California, and may enter and leave the country freely.

Citizens may vote in non-binding elections.

Mutants and Other Alternative Individuals

Believing mutation a natural event in the course of human history, the Executive Branch hereby rescinds the *Genetic Purity Mandate*. Mutants are granted full and equal citizenship. Use of mutant power for unfair interpersonal or economic advantage is a violation of the Code, subject to the policies and regulations of the Minister of Humanity.

Believing in the dignity of human life, we hereby enact the *Human Experimentation Research Protocols* and the *Degen Citizenship Mandate*. Corporations may no longer engage in human experimentation. The current and extant subjects of Corporate human experimentation ("Degens") are granted full and equal citizenship.

Reparations of an amount to be determined by the Minister of Humanity shall be disbursed to surviving mutants and degens, or to their estates. For the purposes of better understanding of human genetics, a federally funded Mutant Research Sanctuary — to be presided over by an appointed mutant governing board — shall be established under the auspices of the Avalon Act.

The Machine Relations Act, granting citizenship to robots of the classification "Intelligent Autonomous Mechanism," is hereby rescinded.

Right to Bodily Self-Determination

Each Citizen has the right to an intact body. No one may buy, sell, barter, or trade organs or other body parts, nor buy, sell, barter or trade a whole body for mind-transfer ("bodyhopping") or any other purpose. Cybernetic-organism ("cyborg") transplantation may be done in only accordance with medical rules, regulations, and policies outlined in the *Medical Information Administration Holobook*.

Currency, Credit, and Financial, Stock and Commodities Markets

Uni-drafts and *mega-dollars* shall continue to be the American currency. Unlimited-credit drafts ("Black Cards") are hereby prohibited. Platinum, Gold, and Green Cards shall continue to be available pursuant to the standards, regulations, and related policies of the Executive Branch Asset Administration.

Banks and other financial institutions are hereby nationalized and, in order to insure that their operations will be conducted according to the highest ethical and professional standards, their activities supervised and regulated by the Executive Branch.

Free trade being essential to a healthy economy, the various financial, stock, and commodities markets and exchanges shall continue to operate as they are, pursuant to regulation and oversight by the Executive Branch.

Education

All Citizens are entitled to a free education through the college level at public pre-schools, elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities. As this obviates the need for private schools and promotes a distinct, recognizable, and homogeneous national character, private schools are hereby deemed unnecessary. Religious instruction may be undertaken in addition to, but not in place of, public schooling.

Minors choosing not to attend school may be placed at boarding-school camps, with subsequent curtailment of physical and geographical space and movement. Adults choosing not to attend college may have citizenship revoked as a consequence.

All students shall be tested annually via neurotech electrochemical-spectrum readings to determine intelligence. Students falling below the subsequently projected achievement may be required to attend vocational training, or to join the Clean Corps of municipal sanitation/waste-reclamation workers.

Housing

All Citizens are entitled to safe, appropriate housing. The government shall build and maintain public units sufficient to provide for its Citizens, with the goal of helping Citizens reach self-sufficiency and to eventually obtain private, self-purchased units.

Those who do not do so within a federally mandated timeframe calculated by local employment and economic patterns may have citizenship revoked as a consequence.

Medical Care

All Citizens are entitled to free medical, dental, and mental-health care, including preventive care, emergency care, and long-term nursing care. The government shall build and maintain medical facilities and hospices sufficient to provide for its Citizens.

Recognizing the inevitable historical cycle of new diseases and pandemics, all Citizens' medical records shall be databased at the Medical Information Administration of the Minister of Well-Being, with privacy assured to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

Political Activities

Recognizing that the Constitution of the United States of America does not mandate political parties, the Executive Branch hereby prohibits the formation of such parties.

Citizens are prohibited from raising or supplying funds, assets, services, or facilities on behalf of a political party or the candidate of such. Civil and criminal sanctions that may be imposed for violations are extremely severe.

Family

Believing the family to be the cornerstone of American society, and interpersonal relationships to be the bedrock of liberty, the *Childbirth-Regulation Mandate* is hereby rescinded. Citizens are not required to seek official permission for pregnancy and childbirth, nor, conversely, for legal termination of pregnancy.

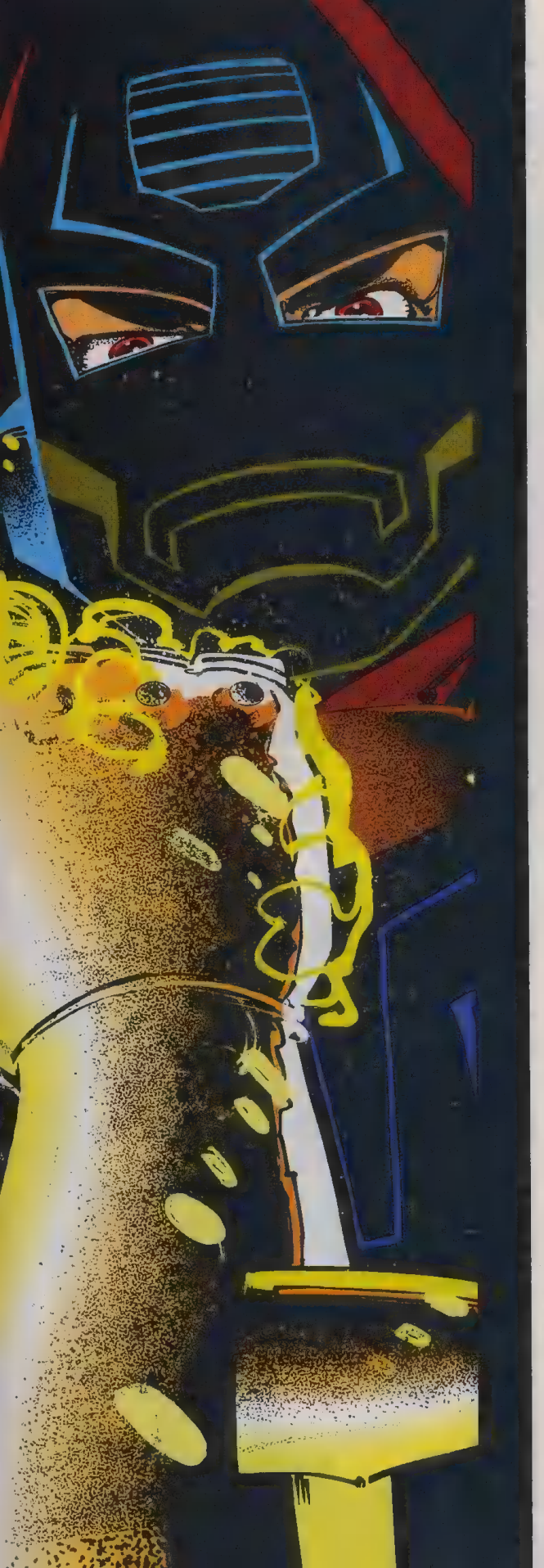
"Family" is defined as any combination of humans, mutants, and cyborgs, consisting of an individual and his or her dependent minor children, if any, or a pair of consenting adults and their dependent minor children, if any, co-habitating for purposes including, but not limited to, procreation, social interaction, economic stability, or community harmony.

No type of family unit shall have more or different legal consideration than any other type of family unit.

Religion

Recognizing the devout and eternal nature of religious beliefs, the Executive Branch strongly reaffirms the longstanding American policy of separation of Church and State. No national religion shall be established or condoned, nor any religion or its adherents persecuted for their beliefs.

Organizations which deify *confirmably* non-divine objects or entities, such as the *Church of the Identified*



Flying Object, are not considered to be religions and shall be regulated as business enterprises.

Cultural Activities

Recognizing the important role played by art, drama, literature, and entertainment ("Cultural Activities") in development and nurturing the human spirit, Cultural Activities shall not be unreasonably regulated or constrained.

Entertainment-media Corporations, remaining subject to the rules, regulations and policies governing all Corporations, are hereby nationalized.

Controlled Substances

Recognizing that the prohibition of narcotic, stimulant, and hallucinogenic drugs ("Controlled ubstances") has resulted in street violence, black-marketing, currency-laundering, and criminal acts of violence and intimidation, the manufacture, sale, and private use of controlled substances shall henceforth be decriminalized. Only federally approved Controlled Substances, chemically engineered to be non-addictive, shall be allowed. "Total Reality" drugs shall continue to be illegal.

Manufacturing or sale of alternate concentrations or formulae, or close chemical relatives ("designer drugs"), shall be a capital offense. Federal control over manufacturing licenses shall be organized in such a way that no corporation may have a monopoly on any controlled substance.

Use of Controlled Substances during the operation of vehicles or during the hours of job performance is prohibited. Civil and criminal sanctions that may be imposed for violations are *extremely* severe.

Approved Controlled Substances are currently limited to the synthetically derived chemicals trademarked as Rapture, Rhapsody, Shriek, and Mr. Ed; and to the naturally derived Black Lotus Extract, Dragonflower, Cocaine, Heroin, and Marijuana. This list is subject to continual review and change without notice. Alcohol shall remain available, though the use of alcohol during the operation of vehicles is prohibited.

Tobacco products — an atmospheric pollutant — remain illegal in all public spaces, and in private spaces not ventilated and filtered in accordance with the *International Emergency Pollution Powers Act.*

Personal Weapons

All non-Militia firearms shall be illegal to possess, buy, or sell. Firearms and police/military armament currently in private possession shall be purchased by the government.

Knives shall be exempt, subject to the rules, regulations and policies of the *Bladed and Non-Bladed Instruments Act.* Ceremonial weapons likewise shall be exempt, subject to the rules, regulations and policies of *Cultural Artifacts Act.*

Biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons shall be illegal for private use.

Use of weapons (including sporting gear and household items converted to weapons use) in the commission of a crime constitutes a capital offense.

SUPERHUMANS

Recognizing the longstanding American tradition of self-sufficient individuality and heroic iconography, the activities of non-criminal, costumed, and non-costumed adventurers ("Super Heroes") shall not be outlawed, subject to continual review.

No formal registration of Super Heroes is currently in effect.

"Super Hero" is defined as any pro-social, non-criminal human, mutant, cyborg, or artificial individual, either of Earth or elsewhere, with powers far beyond those of mortal humans, and involved, fulltime or part-time, with vigilante activity. Such powers include strength, speed, agility, or durability statistically beyond that of human maximum as determined by the Medical Information Administration database; possessing any confirmable degree of telepathic, telekinetic, energy-manipulative or metamorphic abilities; or possessing bodily additions, — natural or artificial — supplying normally-impossible abilities.

"Adventurer" is defined as any pro-social, non-criminal human, mutant, cyborg, or artificial individual, without such powers and involved with vigilante activity.

Those covered under the appellations "Super Hero" and "Adventurer" include those so named by Executive Branch, and self-declared individuals. In either instance, civilian identities must be revealed to the Executive Branch, and will be maintained in confidence to the extent practicable.

Super Heroes and Adventurers must accept the regulations and responsibility of voluntary Auxiliary Police. They may use reasonable force in the apprehension of suspects, pending police arrival, and may defend themselves to extreme prejudicial degree, except against the police, any other government officials, or any megacorp officer or employee.

They may *not* interfere with the police or judiciary in the conduct of their duties.

Super Heroes and Adventurers, acknowledging they are a voluntary backup force to the regulated Police, and thus have no need for independent organization, may not work in consolidation with other Super Heroes as a formal or informal team. Temporary exceptions may be made in documentable emergencies.

Citizens must report in a timely fashion all personal encounters with Super Heroes and Adventurers.

Approved Super Heroes and Adventurers

The following list, subject to continual update, details the official status of known Super Heroes and Adventurers, and instruction for appropriate behavior by Citizens when encountering such individuals. **All other Adventuring or Super-Human entities should be considered hostile, dangerous, and a threat to the Nation.** Personal encounters with ***or sightings of*** such individuals must be reported immediately to the Minister of Order.

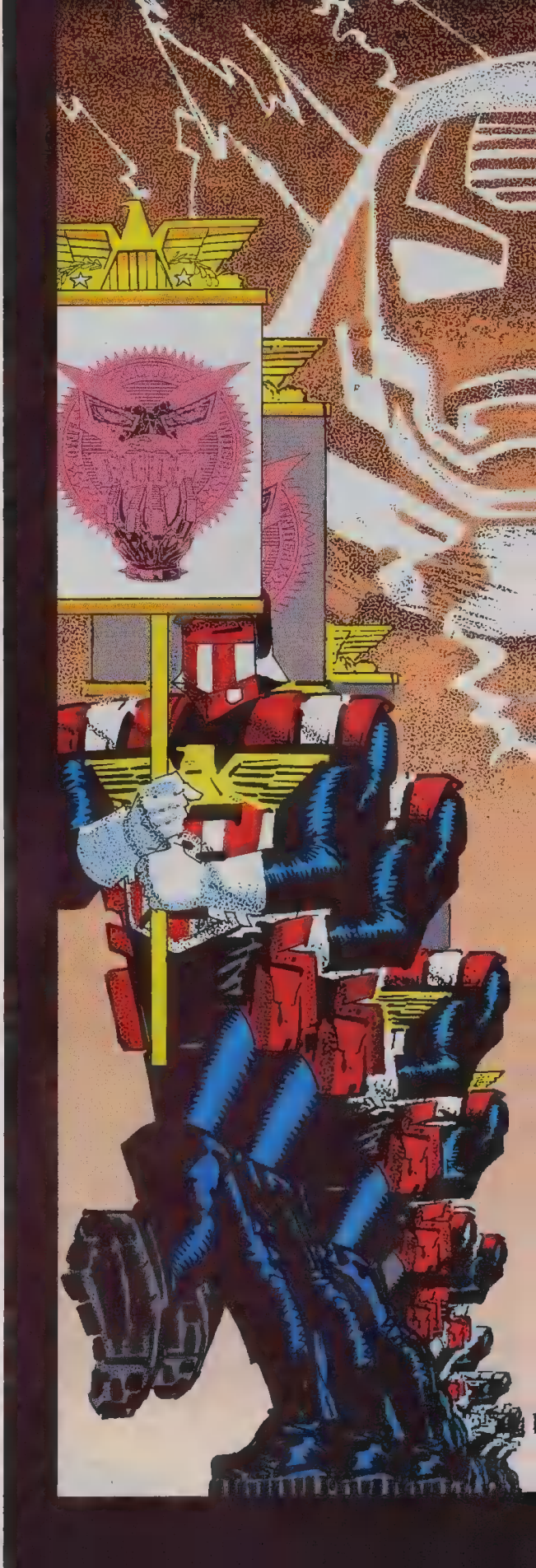
▪ **Spider-Man** is the formally appointed Special Agent/Super Hero Liaison.

General description: Spider-Man, based in New York City, is a masked, super-strong, super-agile male with retractable talons on feet and hands, venomous fangs, extremely fast reflexes, an effective sixth sense ("spider sense") alerting him to danger, and weapons and transportation equipment including sticky, firable, air-solvent webbing. Highly mobile, he is often found in glider-mode self-transport via light-byte airfoils on his blue-and-red attire.

Behavior when encountering: Approach with a low degree of caution. Spider-Man exhibits quirky personality traits including an attempted sense-of-humor and an idealistic response to Citizens in danger. However, he has been found to be temperamental and immature, and thus capable of erratic and unpredictable responses.

▪ **Ghost Rider** is the formally appointed Federal Marshal for Transverse City.

General description: Ghost Rider is a humanoid,



quasi-human male entity consisting of a Modified Cybertek 101 chassis housing a metatasking nuero-mimetic network. He is robotic-appearing, though not a robot, with a gleaming metallic skull and robotic appearing arms able to transmogrify into various metallic weapons. His usual mode of transportation is a stealth-equipped Ford Velociraptor 900XL skycycle with a-grav propulsion, supercharged turbo-thrusters and pseudo-leather upholstery.

Behavior when encountering: Most Citizens encountering Ghost Rider will be either A) suspects, who are required to surrender and obey orders immediately, or B) fellow officers, who are instructed to follow procedural protocol. Other Citizens may approach with medium-high caution, as Ghost Rider exhibits generalized, non-specific anger, bitterness, and anti-authoritarian hostility, and thus may offer misdirected violence.

• **X-Men and Affiliate Western Mutants** are the formally appointed Special Agents for the Security of Avalon:

Shakti Haddad (no alias): Female telepath; unmasked; capabilities include dampening targets' motor functions.

Krystalin Ogada (no alias): Female; unmasked; capable of creating atmosphere-porous crystals of various sizes; can fire as projectiles or trap targets within.

Timothy Sean Fitzgerald (a.k.a. Skullfire): Male; unmasked; energy-siphoning abilities; capable of firing absorbed-energy blasts.

Henri Huang (a.k.a. Meanstreak): Male; unmasked; super-speed.

"Eddie": Male; unmasked; metal-mimetic skin.

Bloodhawk: Red-skinned, humanoid, lizard-like male; unmasked; natural wings offer flight capability.

La Lunatica a.k.a. (Luna): White-skinned female; unmasked; capable of absorbing various spectra of neural energy.

• **Others:**

Junkpile is a deputized **SHIELD** agent. His powers and abilities are *CLASSIFIED.*

Ethan Shields (a.k.a. Galahad) is a member of Stark-Fujikawa internal security. He has no official status, and no authority to intervene in public affairs.

Rogue Adventurers

The following adventurers are to be considered dangerous and a threat to the security and well-being of the Nation, and are not to be confronted or approached. Citizens are required to report any and all sightings of these individuals to the Minister of Order:

The Hulk (alias: CLASSIFIED): Superhumanly large, muscular, powerful, green-skinned male; unmasked; generally found in SoCal region; affiliated with rebel management forces involved in illegal takeover of Lotusland Entertainment. **Extremely dangerous and savage. Do not approach. Reward for verifiable data re: any and all activities.**

Duke Stratosphere: Human male; unmasked; often encountered as Cyberspace archetype; rebel programmer of exceptional ability; Cyberspace explorer with misguided anarchistic humor, resulting in surreal and irrelevant cyberscapes; dishonorable and capable of treachery; generally of no immediate threat to Citizens, but treasonous nonetheless. **Considered subversive. Do not engage in dialog. Reward for verifiable data re: any and all activities.**

The Net Prophet: Humanoid male; unmasked; extremely dangerous reality-manipulation ability; found as both physicalized self and Cyberspace archetype; the Executive Branch concludes that apparent good intentions may be a facade for plans of world domination, making The Net Prophet **extremely dangerous and subversive. Do not engage in dialog. Reward for verifiable data re: any and all activities.**

Metalscream a.k.a. John _____: Male; unmasked; occultech necromancer; generally found in Arizona cloaked house, "The Mantic Gallery"; engaged in apparent superheroic activities of as-yet limited scope. Not yet considered dangerous, pending further actions.

The Sisterhood of Tears: Self-described "holy order" of vampiric entities, including **Sister Lucia**, a teacher and wandering vampiress generally wearing a traditional nuns' habit; and **Lachryma (a.k.a. Becka McBride)** a female vampiress engaged in apparent superheroic night activities of as-yet limited scope. **All members of the sisterhood are considered extremely dangerous and subversive. Do not approach.**

Hap Hazzard: Male; unmasked; Virtual Reality holo-character given physical form; generally found in SoCal region; charged with ionic energy allowing virtually unlimited Net access, transmogrification of machinery, and reality-manipulation; engaged in apparent superheroic activities of limited scope. Not yet considered dangerous.

All other adventurers are to be considered Criminal Adventurers unless declared otherwise by the Executive Branch.

MEGACORPORATIONS

Corporations, megacorporations, and multinational partnerships with a significant presence in the Nation (herewith "Corporations") are hereby nationalized. The term "significant presence" is defined solely by the Executive Branch.

The Confederation of World Industries, composed of **Alchemax, Stark-Fujikawa,** and **Synthia Agri-Business,** is hereby disbanded. Each company will continue to operate as an independent concern, subject to Executive Branch oversight.

Each Corporation, recognizing itself as a responsible member of the Republic and of the global community, will conduct business in a manner consistent with both the spirit and the letter of the law.

Summary of Key Laws and Related Policies

• Corporation profits above a federally mandated percentage shall be retained in the National Enrichment Fund for disbursement at the sole discretion of Executive Branch.

• Corporate executives must observe a salary cap equal to the annually reviewed and publicly listed federal maximum. Cash and non-cash bonuses may not exceed a federally mandated percentage.

• Corporations may not restrict government access to any business, financial, or technological information of any kind, means, or media. Monopoly corporations may not restrict public access to information, with the exception of research-and-development data; such data may be made public at any time at the discretion of the Executive Branch.

• Corporate actions may not lead to direct or indirect environmental damage. Questions as to whether an action may produce foreseeable environmental damage may be directed to the Minister of Order. Should environmental damage result from Ministerial approval, the Minister shall be held responsible, provided all Corporate data was accurate and timely. No toxic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers will be applied to ground, air, water, flora, or fauna. Harvested renewable resources must be replaced on a 3:1 ratio.

• Corporations are prohibited from mining or trading in the following minerals without ■ permit: Tritonium, Vibranium. Corporations ■■ prohibited from manufacturing the following alloys without ■ permit: issued by the Minister of Order: Adamantium, Castrodinium, All mining contracts must be approved.

• Corporations may not engage in human experimentation. Clinical trials of medicines, drugs, technologies, and procedures may be conducted at Federal research centers under the auspices of the Minister of Well-Being. Animal research will be allowed by Ministry Permit only upon proof that cyber-simulation will be inadequate.

• Corporations may conduct no business whatsoever with Corporations listed on the *Executive Branch Enemies File* of companies determined to have committed Code violations. In cases of company termination or bankruptcy, all goods or trade pending will be fulfilled through the Federal Corporate-Euthanasia Council.

• Corporations may trade internationally only with countries (or with Corporations incorporated in such countries) having Favored-Nation status. Extraterrestrial trade with other than American lunar or Martian colonies is prohibited.

• Corporations may not trade with entities or organizations recognized by the Minister of Punishment as belonging to, or affiliated with, organized crime, including but not limited to:

The Cyber-Nostra
The Ninja Nostra
The Greater Nevada Syndicate.

• Corporations may utilize no security force outside the perimeters of their Corporate facilities and offices, unless for transportation of Corporate goods or personnel.

• Corporations may not exert direct economic leverage against another Corporation by selling or trading goods or services at below cost, or by offering incentives with the net effect of selling or trading below cost.

• Corporations may not knowingly make any false statement whatsoever to a government official, nor conceal any material fact in ■■ investigation.

• Corporations may not commit or induce to commit the illegal transfer of proprietary or classified information.

• Corporate facilities, personnel, and intangible holdings may at any time be redirected to projects deemed by the Executive Branch ■■ in the national interest, and any Corporate transaction may be negated for like reason.

Labor and Employment Law

All Citizens and Corporations must comply with all applicable United States and foreign labor and employment laws. Citizens and Corporations shall observe non-discriminatory employment, and health and safety policies and programs.

If a Citizen believes he or she has been subjected to unlawful employment discrimination, the Citizen must contact the office of the Minister of Order. All complaints will be investigated swiftly and in as confidential ■ manner ■■ possible. Corrective and disciplinary action will be taken.

Summary of Key Labor Laws and Related Policies

• Corporations may offer no lifetime employment contracts without reasonable escape clauses.

• Corporations may not base hiring decisions on, nor terminate employment due to, gender, race, color, creed, religion, age, marital status, biological status, sexual orientation, physical disability, national origin, veteran status, or reportage of Code violations.

• Terminations due to cause must be documented and the records permanently maintained. Terminations due to corporate downsizing may take place only after executive salary and bonuses have been decreased a percentage equal to personnel cuts.

• Corporate employees may unionize for purposes of collective bargaining, but may not strike. Disputes and adjudication will be judged by the Office of the Minister of Order.

• Corporations may not utilize child labor, slave labor, or *de facto* variations of such, nor trade with any Nation or Corporation that does so.

• Corporations must offer paid family leave, vacations, and federally mandated paid holidays.

• All businesses with five or more full- or part-time employees must offer a minimum wage equal to federal minimum. This wage must rise semi-annually based on local unemployment levels and company profitability. Full-time work shall be offered first to part-time employees, unless they are minors.

• All outside contractors ("freelancers") must be compensated a federally mandated royalty percentage for all commercial uses of technologies created by such. Freelance artists, writers and other intellectual-property creators must be compensated a federally mandated royalty for all subsequent uses and sales of a work beyond first paid publication, use, or display.

• Employees and freelancers may not engage in any scheme to defraud the Corporation or a customer, supplier or other entity out of money, property, or services.

INDEPENDANT MUNICIPALITIES

In order to encourage the geographical flourishing of ideas, and to reduce the monopolistic concentration of power, the Executive Branch supports the long and established American tradition of local communities. The population of Indygovs are to be accorded all commercial, educational, judicial, and security-related benefits of Corporation-based communities.

Indygov mayors will be appointed by the Minister of Order. Mayors will appoint community and school boards for the purpose of responding to unique local needs. All decisions of such boards must comply with federally mandated directives.

INFORMATION ACCESS

Conventional Media

Recognizing the longstanding American tradition of a free press, the activities of the media — including reportage, essays, editorials, criticism, and reviews — shall not be unreasonably regulated or constrained, except by the Executive Branch.

Neither Citizens nor the government, except for the Executive Branch, shall have access to private notes or conversations between journalist and source.

All requests for information about the government, or requests for interviews with any government employee, will be referred to the Minister of Signal to ensure appropriate and timely response. All government press releases must be submitted to the Minister of Signal for approval.

The Net (Cyberspace and Other Alternate Realities)

"The Net" is defined as the data and communications network linking our Nation, including both physical components and the incorporeal region known as Cyberspace — a.k.a. the Cybernetverse (herewith "Cyberspace").

All Citizens are granted access to The Net. All Citizens are mandated to access The Net, with a federal minimum of twice daily.

All public housing facilities shall have a minimum of one Net terminal, with 24-hour government servicing. Non-functioning Net terminals must be reported immediately. CYNEX public-access terminals shall be available to the population on a ratio basis appropriate to local population and geographic patterns.

Cyberspace is the incorporeal dimension at the interface of mental and computerized data storage, transmission, and interaction. It shall be considered a subsidiary realm of the United States, subject to all provisions of the Code.

Citizens' archetypes may travel freely in Cyberspace,

provided a trackable cyberpath is laid for the safety and security of the traveler. The Executive Branch *Cyberdive Cadre,* under the auspices of the Minister of Signal, shall have authority over all Citizens' cyberspace travel, and may at its discretion designate secured and locked Danger Zones.

Protection of Proprietary and Classified Information

Proprietary and classified information may be any formula, design, device, or data maintained in secrecy for the national interest, and which gives the Nation an advantage over foreign governments. Citizens or Corporations may not improperly disclose or use any proprietary or classified information.

In order to best insure the safety and protection of Nation's proprietary information, all Executive Branch locations of Cyberspace are off-limits, under threat of treason, to all except those designated by the Executive Branch. Treason is punishable by death.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The Nation recognizes its obligation to carry out its activities in a manner that preserves and promotes a clean, safe and healthful environment. All Citizens will comply strictly with environmental laws and regulations. The Nation will ensure compliance through vigilant monitoring, and the training and disciplining of Citizens.

The Nation is committed to control of the environment and weatherPand the assurance of a healthy atmosphere — through the use of orbital Environmental Maintenance Platforms (EMPs).

All potential environmental impacts will be evaluated with a view to enhancing conservation of energy and natural resources, minimizing release of any pollutant that may cause environmental damage, minimizing the creation of waste, safe and responsible waste disposal methods, minimizing environmental risks by employing safe technologies and operating procedures, and by being prepared for emergencies.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Recognizing that the United States is a responsible, respected member of the global community, and that individuals of all nationalities, ethnicities and cultures have historically coexisted on this planet, the Nation has no current plan to impose its sovereignty on any foreign government, state, nation, or territory, except as may be necessary for the national interest.

Favored Nations

Diplomatic and free-trade treaties have been established and are in effect with the following foreign countries designated "Favored Nations":

The European Continental Consolidate
The Free Russia Alliance
The Federated States of America
The Texas Republic
Wakanda
Myridia.

Suspect Nations

No diplomatic activities or trade shall be conducted with nations in violation of the *United States' International Emergency Pollution Powers Act, the Trading with the Enemy Act, the Child-Labor Reduction Act,* and related Executive Orders and Minister of Enemy Relations regulations. Currently, such restrictions are in effect with:

Egypt
The People's Republic of China.

Restricted Favored Nation

For reasons of environmental delicacy, trade is restricted with, and travel severely restricted to, the following otherwise Favored Nation:

The Savage Land.

EXTRATERRESTRIALS

Any and all extraterrestrial life is to be considered hostile unless declared otherwise by the Executive Branch. Any and all contact or presumed contact with extraterrestrial life, artifacts, or evidence thereof must be reported to the Minister of Order.

MAGIC

Recognizing that the finite, controllable, interdimensional energy spectrum referred to herewith as "Magic," or any science sufficiently advanced as to be mistaken for Magic, is notoriously unpredictable, sketchily documented, and extremely dangerous, it is hereby illegal to use or attempt to use Magic.

Technomancy, the synthesis of science and magic ("occultech"), is likewise proscribed.

AFTERWORD

While this Code provides definitive answers, there are no definitive questions. Our Nation must ultimately rely on each Citizen's good sense of what is required to comply with the fundamental principles of our democracy.

Our Nation's ability to meet the challenges of the future will depend on our Citizens' understanding of — and obedience to — the letter and the spirit of the Code. Every Citizen must understand that compliance with the Code is a condition of continued Citizenship. Your President is committed to maintaining our Nation's position as world leader by providing the best and most fulfilling opportunities for its Citizens, and by consistently emphasizing innovation and high quality-of-life, all of which will be achieved by strict and unquestioning adherence to the Code.

Rest assured that yours is a compassionate government. All of us, from time to time err (except for the Executive Branch). Transgressions will be judged fairly in relation to context and circumstances, unless we deem otherwise for any reason whatsoever.

There is no need to give thanks. Your continued obedience and unquestioning loyalty to this great Nation is thanks enough.

I pledge, Citizens, to fulfill my part of this great Contract with America.

And you, of course, will fulfill yours.

Frank Lovece, Official Transcriber for the Minister of Signal, writes the Marvel series ***WRAITHEART,*** *available in April. His previous Marvel series include* ***NIGHTSTALKERS*** *and* ***HOKUM & HEX.***

OUT OF MY HEAD

You'll notice that, when asked to talk on my own behalf, I manage to kick away an imaginary pebble, mutter "Aw shucks," and happily change the subject, point the unforgiving spotlight somewhere else.

Why should tonight be any different? Mr. Saffel has asked me to say a few words on behalf of the 2099-O-Verse, and as usual, in the words of the Jed Leland character from Citizen Kane, "What a disagreeable old man I have become."

On the subject of my own crises and credentials, I don't speak. Of the former, you don't care; of the latter, I'm embarassed. I prefer to speak instead of the credentials and accomplishments of the artists and writers, for whom you plunk down that money in the first place.

Pat Broderick has had a remarkable run on **DOOM 2099 A.D.** The attention to detail, the willingness to make every page look like a Gustave Dore etching, the furshlugginer determination to draw that incredibly ornate suit of armor in every panel. And I can't say enough about the covers, each of which would make mighty nice posters in their own right.

Warren Ellis would probably despair to hear me say this, because he would be experiencing some strange synasthesia that enabled him to actually hear the words represented on this printed page. As Daffy Duck says, "Let's run by thhhhhat again." What I meant was, Warren would probably prefer I didn't set this down exactly, but he's one of the few writers in comics who seems to have garnered a genuine cult following. His work on **HELLSTORM** managed to snag him a good deal of industry (oh, let's stop calling it that. I see that word in print and I get a mental image of smokestacks and smelting equipment) attention. Enough to entrust him a second time with **DRUID**, the upcoming bookshelf project **ASHES**, and uh-huh, the chronicles of Latveria's Favorite Son, **DOOM 2099**.

Rick Leonardi, too, is just swell. We've had him around so long that we kinda took him for granted. His ease of storytelling and ability to draw figures that have genuine grace was easy to get used to. He'll be back, as soon as he finishes penciling **SPIDEY 2099 PROJECT X**. Meantime, Roger Robinson, Jimmy Palmiotti, Andrew Wildman and Stephen Baskerville are doing a fine job bringing the ubiquitous Peter David's whims and creations to chilling life.

Speaking of Peter, was there ever an act that needed no introduction? From him and from John Moore, I've learned enough about my own craft to feel that I've been heretofore taking money under false pretenses.

Look in the Unabridged under "enthusaism" and there's probably a drawing by Ron Lim. Knowing Ron, it'd be ten pages of drawings. Ron's contribution to the character designs has made the **X-MEN 2099 A.D.** title a remarkable read. His inker, Harry Candelario, is doing the best work of his career here, too.

If you want to see how redefinition is done, see what Pat Mills, Tony Skinner and Simon Coleby do to **PUNISHER 2099 A.D.: AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.**

I'm a stranger in Transverse City, but Len Kaminski knows the territory. Maps are gleefully provided by Graham Higgins and Christie Scheele.

John Nyberg, Greg Adams, Joe Bennett, Gerry Jones, Malcolm Davis, Chris Ivy. . .I really should be throwing a party at my house, shouldn't I?

Oh. Ever see *Doctor Strangelove* or *The Fly*? You know, where the title character kind of loses control of one hand and needs the other to bring it back in line? Lia Plosi and Matt Morra are two good right hands who've been trying to figure out what the left hand is doing for over a year now.

This is going on longer than Dutch Schultz's last words. Hello? Hello? Is this thing on?

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